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THE

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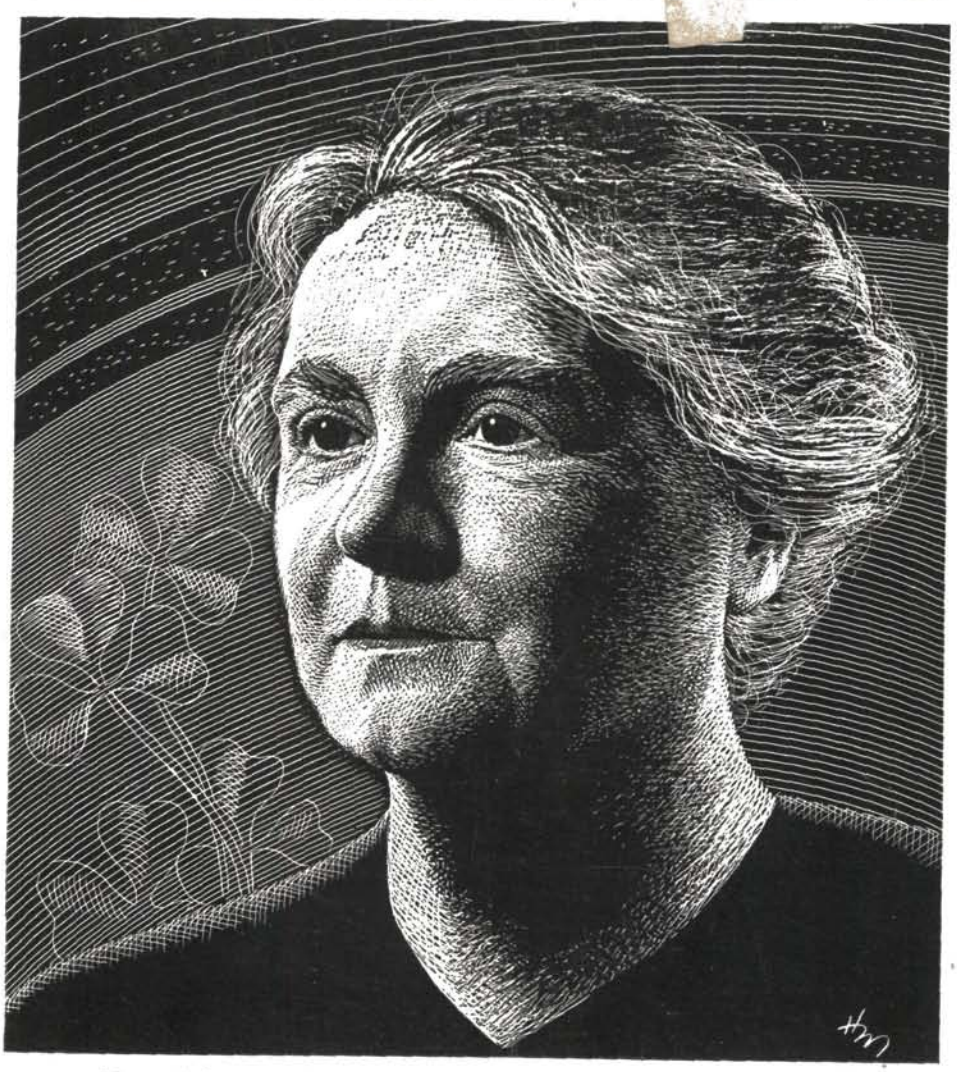

Mary Colum, author of "Life and the Dream." (See page 14)

Poetry as Symbolic Thinking

By DONALD A. STAUFFER

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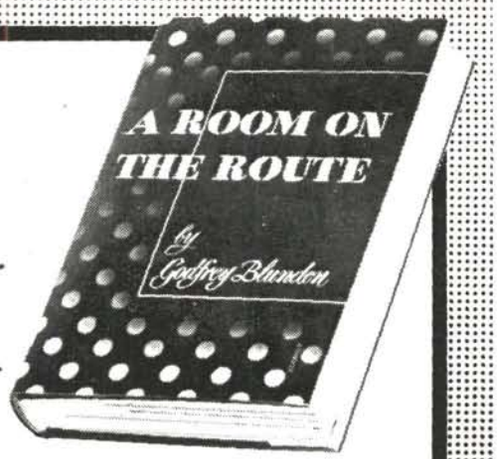

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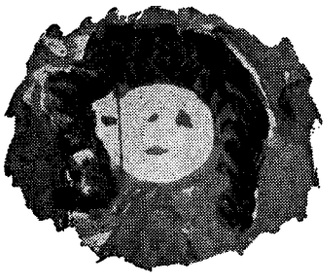

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William Rose Benét, *Editor*

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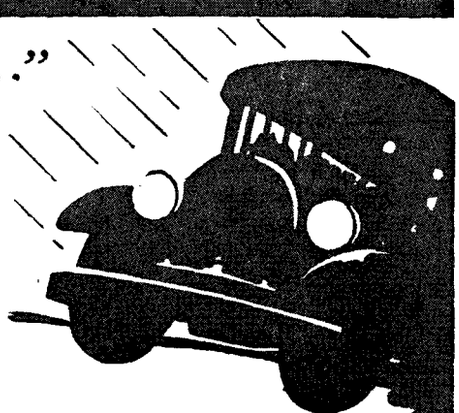

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—HARRISON SMITH, *Saturday Review of Literature*

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The WAYWARD BUS

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TRADE Winds

SALVADOR DALI, that somewhat different artist, has been doing quite a bit of book illustrating lately, leaping nimbly from Shakespeare's "Macbeth" to Cervantes's "Don Quixote." Negotiations for the latter project were particularly delicate, and hung by a thread at the last moment. The overall price had been settled, but the publisher suddenly asked, "How many full-page color illustrations do you intend to supply?" Mons. Dali, who speaks no English—at least not during business hours—held up five fingers. The publisher picked up his hat and coat and said, "Anyhow, it's been a lot of fun." Mrs. Dali, who acts as her husband's agent, saved the day by hurriedly explaining, "When Dali says 'five,' he means 'ten'."

Naive souls who think the publishers are allowed to keep Dali's originals may be interested to know that he sold the "Don Quixote" set to a private collector for about ten times the fee he received for their use in book form. Possibly encouraged by this transaction, Dali has promised to talk English more frequently hereafter. "I really understand very well now," he admitted. "It remains only for my friends to speak a little better." His philosophy is summed up in a foreword he wrote for his own novel, "Hidden Faces." "Sooner or later," he confided there, "everyone is bound to come to me. Some, untouched by my painting, concede that I draw like Leonardo. Others have discovered in me literary gifts superior to the skill which I reveal in my pictures. Others proclaim that I have a unique gift for the theatre. It is difficult to avoid coming under my sway in one way or another."

Critics, disregarding Dali's personal eccentricities, agree that from a technical standpoint he is one of the greatest artists of all time. The master himself sees to it that he is publicized properly. He delivered one lecture about his art in a diver's helmet. He designed a window display for a Fifth Avenue department store, and, carefully biding his time until the police, press, and a camera crew hove into view, smashed the plate-glass window in a frenzy of what might be called spontaneous combustion. For the 1939 World's Fair he cooked up a side-show of diving mermaids in suggestive costumes that brought the censorship squad on the double. They were told this was Dali's "surrealist art," and were so mystified they allowed the exhibition to continue. One of them was heard to mutter, "Dali, hey? Wonder what his sisters, Yanczi and Rozika, would say about this!"

Dali's preoccupation with mermaids has communicated itself to another distinguished artist in a different medium—Nunnally Johnson. Nunnally is now making a motion picture of Guy and Constance Jones's "Mr. Peabody and His Mermaid," and in case he would like Salvador Dali at his side in the process, the chances are he need only wave his magic wand—and a certified check. . . .

ROOTS:—Although F. Scott Fitzgerald's "This Side of Paradise" and "The Beautiful and Damned" were emphatic successes, the author suddenly lost confidence in himself and informed Max Perkins at Scribner's, "I have decided to quit writing and become an ashman." A year later he finished "The Great Gatsby," and was sufficiently restored in spirit to scrawl on the envelope containing the manuscript, "I think this is about the best American novel ever written!" Roger Burlingame relates that Fitzgerald's first notion for a title for "The Great Gatsby" was "Trimalchio in West Egg," and when that was frowned upon by his publishers, he suggested "The High-Bouncing Lover"! At the very last moment, he cabled, "Crazy about title 'Under the Red, White and Blue'! What would delay be?" Perkins's one-word reply was "Fatal." . . . Charles Jackson had trouble, too, finding the right title for "The Lost Weekend." After much discussion, he chose "The Long Weekend" as the likeliest of an unsatisfactory list of suggestions, and took his wife Rhoda to the country for a few days to get away from it all. The holiday was ill-starred from the outset, and a series of minor catastrophes culminated in a blow-out on a lonely road on the last day. Back home at last, Jackson grumbled, "That was my idea of a lost weekend." Rhoda jumped up and cried, "There's your title!" Charlie was already half-way across the room to telephone Stanley Rinehart, his publisher. . . . Richard Lockridge and his wife bought a lakeside cottage in the early thirties that lacked perfection in only one respect: the grass on the lawn simply would not grow properly. One day they were taken to a neighbor's for cocktails. *His* lawn was like velvet, maintained by an elaborate automatic sprinkler system. "Where does this gent get the money to grow such wonderful grass?" whispered Lockridge. "He writes detective stories," explained the man who had brought

"You know, Jim . . . you'd look good with a mustache."

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"From where I sit"

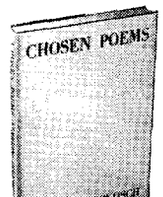
The Muse is standing by my side
This tonic March day, and she will stray
A hand of metaphors and such astride
My thinking pen, along my probing way.

I call to her for just the word;
And she will smile at me a simile.
I ask if tangents were ever heard
To sound their arcs outside the realm of poetry.

I ask how long the heart and why the spring?
And my muse replies invectively, subjectively—
How can you make a stanza sing,
When about you nature's every living thing,
Even without a voice,
Can writhe and twist in ecstasy.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There are two books of poetry published by Doubleday at this time. One is **Chosen Poems** by FREDERICK PROKOSCH containing poems from his works published abroad and nine which have never before appeared. The other is a long narrative poem by JEANNETTE MICHAEL HAIEN and called **Rip Van Winkle's Dream.**



In verse,
The cherse
Is yerse.

paul

DOUBLEDAY 50th Anniversary

him. "His name is Rex Stout." That evening the Lockridges blocked out the plot for their first murder story about Mr. and Mrs. North. . . .

THE LITTLE SHOP

By Raymond Hosken

I'd like to have a little shop
(The very smallest sort would do)
Where browsers were not wont to stop,
And stock was low, and buyers few.

I wouldn't dust, I'd seldom sweep;
With none to buy, I needn't spend.
I'd scoff at income tax, and keep
The bill collector as a friend.

I'd never work on Saturday,
And only when I felt inclined;
I'd turn prospective trade away
And bolt the door, and draw the blind.

What would he eat? I hear them cry—
How would he live? they sadly moan;
To which, undaunted, I reply
I'm more than eager to be shown!

IF YOU LIKE Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers, or his illustrations for the Heritage Press editions of "Tom Sawyer" and "Huck Finn" as much as I do, you will find Watson-Guptill's "Norman Rockwell, Illustrator" a fascinating book. It includes forewords by Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Jack Alexander, and fifty full-page color reproductions. . . . At the Century Club recently an author ruefully perused a devastating review of his new novel by Orville Prescott. "Well, that's the end of one of my pet theories," sighed the author. "Never again will I say that my wife is my severest critic!" . . . Collectors will want copies of "Carrousel for Bibliophiles," first publication of Duschnes-Crawford, Inc. William Targ is the editor, and he has done a fine job. . . . George Lawton, author of "Aging Successfully," made his very first appearance on the radio recently when he participated in the "Town Meeting of the Air" program in Asheville, N. C. There were over five thousand people in the auditorium and Mr. Lawton, who opened the debate, was nervous to begin with. Then, in rapid succession, the electric lighting system went out of commission, he lost a page of his manuscript, and a lady in the front row had an epileptic fit. By the time his remarks were concluded, Mr. Lawton figured that he had aged successfully about fifteen years. . . .

WHEN THE MARKET for war books collapsed completely a year or so ago, the publishers were left with so many copies in their warehouses that even the remainder markets could not absorb them. One enterprising dealer has popped up, however, who is willing to buy them in any quantity for five cents apiece. He sells them in turn to a novelty manufacturer who tears out the insides and inserts a powder cap that explodes when unwary browsers open the covers.

"I call them my shooting books," the dealer explains. When the authors discover the new uses to which their brain children are being put, they may be inclined to do a little shooting of their own.

BENNETT CERF.

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We Proudly Introduce

SAMUEL ROTH'S

HALFWAY

which, in our humble opinion, will probably be accepted as

The most significant narrative poem of our time

HERE ARE THE OPENING FIVE STANZAS:

The world was never made to one man's measure.
It was too tight a fit for Alexander;
Socrates bagged it at the knees and elbows;
for Plato it was broad about the shoulders;
while Philo wore it only on the Sabbath.

In our own time, Descartes drew it about him
cloakwise, as if to cover the whole orbit
of light and shade in which we bloom and wither.
Did the orbit expand? or the cloak crumple?

When the earth seems too big for its surveyors
the difference between it and its leaders
is the size of the world. When it's the earth that
seems small, the men loom big. Each change of
feeling forms its own sphere. When disagreement
dies out the world dies, too.
As long as I remember,
I found the world easy enough to put on
mornings, and wade in through the day. Only the
night troubled me, and reduced me to writing.
I couldn't work or sleep or even idle.
The dust drove me from my neglected household
into the humbler midnight eating-places
that lease a table with a cup of coffee,
and in such a time and place I first met him.

He seemed like any battered solitary
on the ragged edges of the night's market,
by his clothing and by the way he wore it:
the shapeless hat, a thing of stains and corners;
the blue shirt open at the swarthy neckline;
the coat and pants as patternless as sailcloth;
the shoes long lost to their original owner;
yet nothing in a world of sun- and star-light
had ever crowded me with so much brightness.

As Virgil led Dante through the gateway of Hell, the Stranger leads our poet into the I 'erno of our present-day world—through England, France, Germany Poland, Russia, Palestine, China, Japan—then back to America. You begin to understand about these nations fearful luminous truths which you would find in your own heart if you had the poet's divining power to do so.

HALFWAY has a unique background. At the end of World War I, Boni & Liveright published a similar poem by Roth, entitled *Europe* which was translated into several European languages, and into Hebrew in Palestine. In *Europe* Roth outlined so clearly the events of the next 25 years that he has recently received many letters from readers suggesting its republication—like another *Nostradamus*.

The comparison is not so flattering. It is one thing to suggest what will happen 1000 years later to nations whose names you do not even know, quite another to tell people *what will transpire tomorrow*.

Because of the groundless public accusation that he issued Joyce's *Ulysses* without his permission, Roth has published little recently under his own name. *HALFWAY* would have been sacrificed to the mask of a pseudonym, if friends had not interfered.

"Revelation," it was pointed out to him, "cannot be accomplished anonymously, but from mouth to ear, *from the mouth of the poet to the ear of the world.*

"And what does it matter that you're misrepresented? When he thought that the voice of God bid him, Isaiah put on a halter and walked with it through the streets of Jerusalem. The evil talk of your enemies is your halter. Wear it proudly."

And suppose the charges against Roth were as true as those made by the authorities against Villon? Would that dim the beauty of his speech, or subtract from the splendor of his vision?

HALFWAY finds the world crouched in the corner of its last struggle with destiny, listening to those dreadful ironies pounding away in its heart, that no one before Roth has dared to utter—and that every one must hear and understand if mankind is to stagger out for another magnificent round of civilization.

** The permission to serialize* Ulysses *in Roth's* Two Worlds *came from Joyce's agent Ezra Pound who later quarrelled with both Roth and Joyce and refused to take sides in the dispute.*

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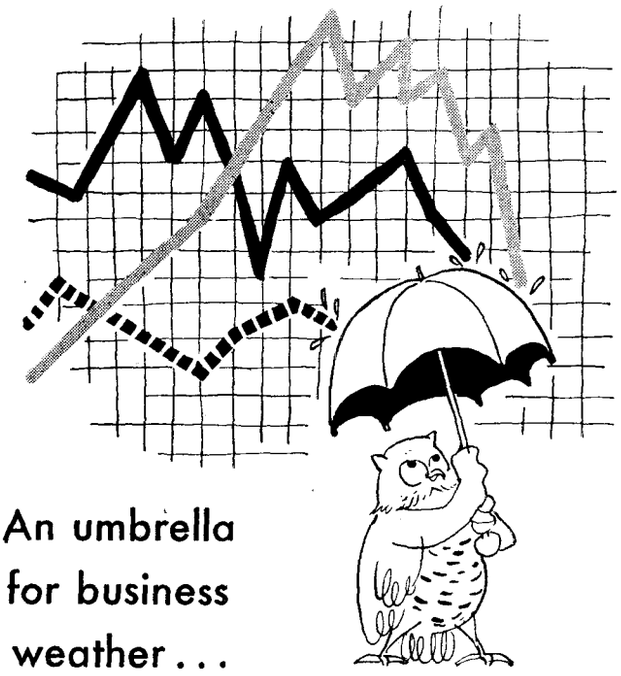

An umbrella for business weather . . .

A GREEK word that means "moving in circles" has become the keystone of a new science, the science of prediction. Everything in the world seems to move in *cycles* . . . day and night, the seasons, sunspots, the tides, droughts. But in most of us, such elemental facts of nature inspire nothing more than simple acceptance. We know they exist, but lazily conclude that there's nothing we can do about them, or learn from them. It is probably that kind of thinking that led the United States Commissioner of Patents to report solemnly, in 1880, that everything worth while had been invented, and that we might as well close the Patent Office!

Fortunately, our great minds are also the most curious: Leonardo da Vinci, patiently studying the flight of birds; Franklin, sending up a kite in a storm; Watts, puzzling over water boiling in a tea kettle; Sir Francis Bacon, wondering what caused Europe's weather cycle to repeat every 35 years.

Other such cycles in nature, and the related cycles in the activity of man, have for many years aroused the interest of two other curious men—Edward Dewey and Edwin Dakin. They have collected a wealth of seemingly unrelated data . . . have charted it, studied it, analyzed it, compared it . . . and they have finally come up with some fascinating and startling conclusions . . . all carefully documented with facts, figures, graphs and tables. Here are just a few odd items from their book, CYCLES:

☆ The stock market booms and busts with the regular rise and fall of the birthrate of field mice.

☆ Sunspots have no apparent effect on crops, but do seem to affect business activity.

☆ The same cycle that operated for the Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage operated for the 3 great wars in American history . . . each occurred around the peak of our 54 year economic wave.

☆ The ups and downs of human emotions also have regular periodicities; they vary between 2½ and 9½ weeks, depending on the individual. Keep a chart of when you get "blue" and you'll discover your own emotional rhythm.

☆ All the major economic cycles are now heading downward and will hit bottom together in 1952 That means: *stormy business weather ahead!*

☆ The next market boom is due about 1956; the next industrial upswing, 1953-1980.

☆ Rents are headed for a crackup before 1950. Caution: *don't sign long-term leases at high rentals!*

☆ Ozone is the reproduction force in the universe; the amount in the air determines the abundance of wild life.

Rhythms were discovered in natural phenomena long before they began to show up in economics. Ever since 1844, when such records began to be kept, the abundance of lynx has swung from 4,000 to 70,000 in a regular 9 2/3-year biological cycle. This wave pattern also shows up in the annual figures on Atlantic salmon, tent caterpillars, death by heart disease in north-eastern United States, and in the volume of ozone in the atmosphere. There is another 9-year physical cycle which alters the rings of the California Sequoia, shows up in the amounts of electrical charge in the atmosphere, links with the suicide rate, affects the price of common stocks. The 18-year cycle in the marriage rate strangely parallels such activity as real estate, building, and wheat acreage planting. And finally, there's a 54-year cycle in the economic life of the United States that affects wages, wholesale prices, wars, and industrial expansion.

Speculation about what causes these waves and why they correspond, when they do, is still in its infancy. But we don't have to understand what produces them in order to use them. The scientists have trouble enough when two of these waves show up in a single organism; and almost always two or more do, in human organisms. The various cycles must then be synthesized to get the final working pattern. An organism with both 3- and 4-year cycles will repeat every 12 years; one with 3-, 5-, 8- and 17-year cycles repeats the entire group every 2040 years.

Things grow faster when they are young . . . and the rate of growth curve takes the same shape for a baby, a business, a pumpkin, the population of Sweden, and the rise and fall of the Spanish Empire. The rise is steep at first. Then it slows up as the organism reaches maturity. The curve of growth bends over suddenly and starts to go down. The length of time may be 5 weeks or 500 years, but the growth curve is identical. This curve is not just a long slope levelling out . . . it's more like an italic parenthesis that has been pulled out horizontally at top and bottom, and then accordion-pleated. You can get a fair idea of what it looks like by thinking of a coiled spring (the cycle) stretched along a bent poker as a core (the trend).

By comprehensively clocking four such major cycles, and many subsidiary ones, the authors of CYCLES have worked out a series of weather charts for American industry that gives the businessman time to get ready for almost any emergency. CYCLES, however, is not a book of crystal gazing; it merely explores the scientific probabilities of tomorrow. That these probabilities can now be timed and plotted is good news for all of us. It's true enough, as Walt Whitman said, that we cannot repeal the past nor repel the future. It's also true that we may not be able to prevent depressions, any more than we can prevent rain or winter But now we don't have to be caught in business bad weather without our umbrellas or rubbers. There will be ample warning.

Cycles

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The Saturday Review of Literature

Poetry as Symbolic Thinking

DONALD A. STAUFFER

A POEM is an entity, like a human being. In a man, spirit and matter are so fused that neither the Platonists nor the materialists have ever succeeded very well in separating them. In a poem, the fusion welds lasting, common, general ideas or attitudes with sharp, concrete particulars or symbols. Adequate reading of a poem implies that its symbols have called up the thoughts to which they are bound, although those thoughts have not lost their life by abstraction and separation from the symbols themselves. Today the average man gets no pleasure from the average poem for perhaps three main reasons: (1) he is unaccustomed to think in symbols; (2) the poets may stress too much the sharp, concrete particulars, as if they were continuing within the limited theory of the Imagists, and (3) the underlying ideas implied in the average modern poem are not good enough, or are not held with any intensity of conviction.

We shall still be thinking about modern poetry and its dire straits if we turn for some time to Sir Francis Bacon. He became, supposedly, the father of modern science when he could no longer endure to see the complexity of the world, "the infinity of individual experience" as he called it, compressed to fit the preconceived patterns of scholastic theory. And, though he may need some alchemist to help him, he calls upon men to sell their books and turn to the experimental method of discovering truth, "quitting and forsaking Minerva and the Muses as barren virgins, and relying upon Vulcan."

Yet that very phrase, heralding the long adventure which has been so perilous to poetry, is in itself a fine example of thinking in symbols. Today we walk away from our heritage Christian and classical—that great palace for imaginative thought—as if it were something outmoded and no longer useful. Not so Bacon. Far from feeling contempt for Greece and Rome, he imagines his reborn world out of an emulative desire to prove that a new age may equal antiquity, proud of "the condition of these times, in which learning hath made her third visitation or circuit." Once again, he has expressed his hopes for this new age of science in symbolic terms: the advancement of learning is like a great queen making for the third time her royal progress.

He is writing an argument (an argument which, incidentally, holds in low esteem the learning and truth that lies in poetry). Yet how much more solid in flesh is his thought than is most modern writing! He does not strip it to the mere bone and muscle of logic, but clothes it in rhetoric and poetry. Long before our semanticists, he is fully aware that "the great sophism of all sophisms" is "equivocation or ambiguity of words and phrase." But he knows also that words cannot prove fully effective if they are limited to denotation: they must appeal to the desires and the imagination, indirectly, past the reach of logic, by equations between images.

He might almost be presenting the dilemma and the problem of the modern poet when he writes:

> Those whose conceits are beyond popular opinions have a double labor; the one to make themselves conceived, and the other to prove and demonstrate. So that it is of necessity with them to have recourse to similitudes and translations to express themselves.

AND he is advancing the central argument of this article when he defends what he calls "*philosophia prima*, primitive or summary philosophy." This primitive philosophy is unlike logic, which considers "things as they are in notion." *Philosophia prima* considers "things as they are in nature." It is the main and common way, that seeks and sees parallels between justice and mathematics, Machiavelli and religion, nature and government, music and love, unresolved chords and rhetorical suspense, the tremolo of an instrument and the playing of light upon the water. "Neither are these only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of nature, treading or printing upon several subjects or matters." And Bacon proceeds to use that famous ranging, magnificent mind of his to find the general truths of nature and policy that lie fused in the Grecian myths.

What an extraordinary occupation for the father of modern science in a treatise purporting to deal with the advancement of learning! To be dabbling with possible and multiple meanings, with the bridges and the similitudes by which the imagination constructs a unity from the atomistic happenings of conscious life! Yet this for Bacon is the *philosophia prima*, the basic knowledge on which the others rest. His mind is working as a poet's.

Today we are not easily content with multiple meanings. We fail to see that hypotheses are the necessary matrices out of which certainties may

All Inward Bred

By Gustav Davidson

NOTHING by our senses fed
of itself is bright or dread;
the eye's incandescence
is in the head.

Consider the lark:
it spills
no song of unpremeditated art;
nor to the ear attuned to its fall
is the air made
musical.

All is inward bred:
the light and dark,
the cognizant and rare;
and of the outerness comprised
nothing is there
that the grasp or hunger of the heart
has not first devised.

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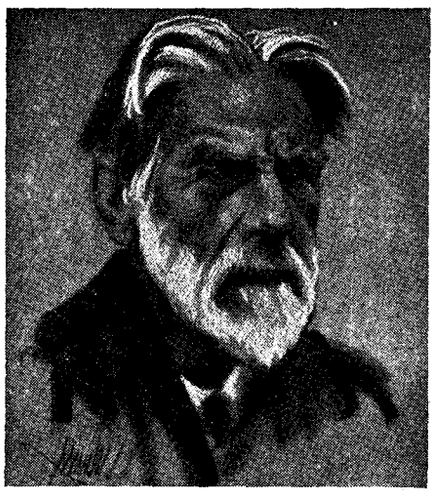


Robert Bridges's "The Testament of Beauty" fails—the thought is too philosophical.

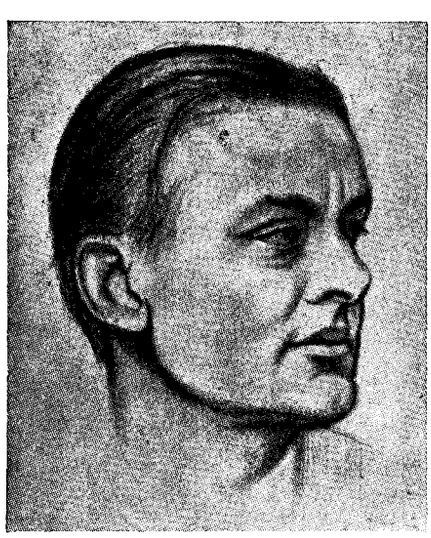
grow. The willing suspension of disbelief that constitutes poetic faith seems to us the act of a child. And the grand hazards under which all poetry is written—"IF these things were so, then what would follow?," "What IF this idea is made into that thing?"—these hazards are dismissed as mere wishful thinking, as if all the facts of civilization did not begin as wishes and creations in someone's mind. Furthermore, since symbols are not flat propositions but complex entities that seem to have a life of their own, we are made uneasy by their slipperiness. "What does this poem MEAN?" is the disgusted cry, and no answer of more than two words is satisfactory. We seek the certainty of propositions, not the uncertainty of living. And we prefer to quote such a line as "Life is real! life is earnest!" to "Absent thee from felicity awhile," because the second line holds too many meanings in suspension. Nevertheless, the art of poetry, since it is imitative, cannot be more certain than life itself. Its deepest thoughts are not conclusions, but speculations; and "the mind of man is far from the nature of a clear and equal glass. Nay, it is rather like an enchanted glass."

The poets of this century, as in all the ages of the greatest poetry, fuse their thoughts and their images until neither the soul nor the body of their poems can exist without the other. Should anyone suppose that Frost's "Masque of Reason" is the simple story of Job? Or that Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror" is designed to tell us about the ocean and a looking-glass?

Three of the most ambitious attempts of the century—"The Testament of Beauty," Ezra Pound's "Cantos," and "The Waste Land"—in spite of their great differences, all work to find the most effective use of symbolic thinking. Robert Bridges's poem fails, if it does fail, because the thought is too much of a philosophical argument to which illustrations are fitted. Pound's "Cantos" cannot win many readers because the images and rhythms, faultless in themselves, are not sufficiently attached to significant thought. And Eliot's poem is the most influential of our lifetime because of the richness *both* of its symbols and its thoughts, from which no single simple moral message may be extricated. Many years will elapse before Yeats's importance as a philosopher will be realized, for he preferred to express his wisdom through the unsystematic vitality of art.

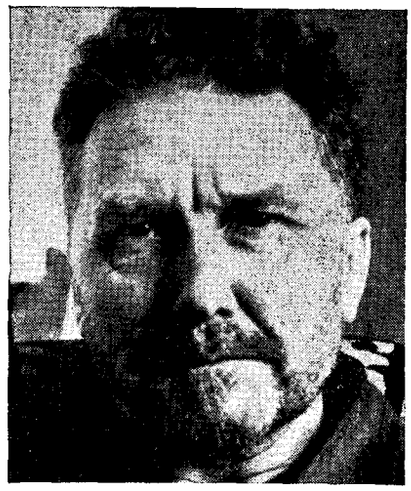
A good poem resists to the death its reduction to a flat statement; and verse which is made up of such flat statements is already dead as poetry. Yet since the climate of our age demands headline certainties and packaged information, the best hope (and not a large hope) for the public is that it will read more poetry, and more imaginative prose when it is of the nature of poetry. Only through long familiarity and practice can the reader respond easily to symbolic thinking. It will repay him many times over, for it is the most spacious, and may be the truest, activity of the human mind: it minimizes neither the particularities of experience nor the large informing ideas which give that experience its significance.

Yet though the public has the responsibility of trying to understand poetry, the poets have no less responsibility to make themselves understood. If it is true that in modern poetry the underlying ideas are not rich enough, the beliefs are not deeply enough held, there is little that the poet can do. He cannot convince himself by an act of will, or furnish splendidly the rooms of his mind



—Sir William Rothenstein.

"T. S. Eliot's poem ['The Waste Land'] is the most influential of our lifetime."



Ezra Pound's "Cantos" has faultless images and rhythms—but is too detached.

through sheer ambition. He may blame his times, concentrate on his technique, and wait for grace.

At least his technique should be the technique of poetry, which means that his images must be genuine symbols for thoughts and not simulacra. The last thirty years have seen astonishing advances and explorations in poetic expression. But the expression of what? The exploration of man's thoughts and his moral needs has not kept pace in poetry with the expansion of technique. Poetry needs more spirits dedicated to the wholeness of human life, which is its great subject, rather than to pure craftsmanship, which is but a part and an abstraction. If contemporary poetry seems to many readers anemic, there is always the possibility that what it needs is a copious transfusion of human blood.

This argument is no plea that modern poetry should abandon its newly discovered subtleties in rhythm, image-making, and psychological insight. Nor is it a plea for simpler poetry. Yet poetry, even profound poetry, may *appear* comparatively simple—do we not have Dante and Shakespeare?—if the symbols express, in all its complexity and dignity, central human thought. The creation of good poetry and an intelligent response to it can be found neither in inane obscurity, nor in popular sentiment and comforting simplicities. Before we have good poetry in any notable amount, more of the reading public must learn to think in symbols, and more of the poets must learn to think.

Donald A. Stauffer is a member of the English department at Princeton University. His "The Nature of Poetry" is one of the best new books on the poetic art. It rests on the assumption that a poet is like a person—and we cannot classify persons.

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James Stephens—Touchstone

LLOYD FRANKENBERG

THE imagination, as James Stephens shows us, is a great wanderer. It turns up unexpectedly anywhere; even here and now. But poetry is where the imagination is when it is at home. It is more *here,* in poetry; and more *now.*

In a double essay, "On Prose and Verse" (1928), Stephens explains how it was he came to write prose at all. A young writer, he says, will discover

> . . . that in the matter of mental and physical energy he is superhumanly endowed; so highly vitalized indeed that he is prepared to affront any mass or magnitude that can be presented to him: and he will inevitably arrive at the opinion that poetry alone cannot absorb the torrent that he actually is. He will turn hopefully to prose.

But from seeing how easily the work of the masters in prose could be bettered, the young man passes through a stage in which he recognizes the paucity of subject matter. The only things worth writing about, he concludes, are murder and philosophy.

> Of course there were some things that I did not know everything about. I knew, for instance, nothing about murder, and less than that about philosophy, and I did not know how to write prose.
>
> Nobody did know how to write prose. Nobody does now. Nobody ever will.
>
> If one were to assert that poetry is closer to speech than prose is we should, rightly, dislike and evade that malicious person, but we should be relieved that the statement had been made.
>
> Poetry is created in the whole phrase; is even, when the gods are benevolent, created in the entire verse. But prose must be invented from comma to comma.
>
> Everything that is in his nature helps the person who can write poetry to write it. Everything that can be conceived combines to prevent the writing of prose. . . . For the matter of poesy comes eagerly to its statement, but that which prose can serve is loath and reluctant; is without any spring or readiness; is void of good will or good humor, and of all else that is good. . . .
>
> In fact a writer of English might be forgiven, and might be somewhat petted and praised, if he should declare with rage, with resignation, that it is not possible to write prose at all.

An admirable conclusion for the writer of ten classics in prose; including "The Insurrection in Dublin," an excellent bystander's account of the happenings of the Easter Week uprising. But then he is the author of as many books of poetry. He has to be fair to them both. And he himself aids us in our search for their affinities and differences.

> This duty of universal self-identification is the same for the prose writer as for the poet. The distinction between them lies in the various tensions which these arts are competent to handle.

In the second part of the essay he goes on to talk more openly about poetry:

> It is not only that we cannot say what poetry is—we cannot say what anything is. . . . In fact reality (poetry) is incapable of expression or exposure, or definition.
>
> This incapacity is not because reality is unknown to us. On the contrary, for there is nothing better known. There is nothing else known. . . . And when, by a chance, something of this quality of actual Being is caught into thought, we recognize it with delight and cry: this is poetry.
>
> We cannot say what poetry is, but we may adventure a speculation as to what it is not; and, by a negative definition, approach to something that has the appearance of the impossibly positive statement.
>
> Poetry is not action, nor passion, nor thought. It contains all of these, carelessly, as it were; but, in a true instance, when these qualities have been eliminated, there remains yet a quality, and that residue is poetry. Nor is it correct to say that a "residue" remains—an excess remains, and that excess is poetry.

James Stephens: "Poetry is created in the whole phrase . . . but prose must be invented from comma to comma."

And that excessive, violent, and loving person, James Stephens, has been longest at home in poetry. His first book, "Insurrections," was a book of poems. And he has gone on writing them long after his last published work in prose.

Although poems of his are included in the anthologies, this side of his writing (which, more than a *side,* is really its center) has been comparatively neglected, especially of late. This may be due to the fact that in structure he does not visibly depart from the conventional. Rather like James Joyce, whose inventiveness went into his prose—and brought it closer to poetry—James Stephens for the most part uses regular metres and straight rhymes. In an age of poetry that has produced perhaps more technical originalities and a greater variety of individual forms than any other, critical interest has naturally tended to focus on these, pro or con. But in all the heated battles between "modernists" and "conservatives" the name of James Stephens is seldom brought up. For if he is not a radical, his position would give small comfort to the opposite camp.

IF the vogue has seemed to pass him by, it must be remembered that vogues bear no relation whatsoever to values, either affirmatively or negatively. By indicating some of the values that reside in James Stephens's poetry—those things that are, as Marianne Moore would say, "genuine" in it—we may be able to cast some light on what is valuable in poetry that presents greater initial difficulty. We may be able to use James Stephens, that is, as a touchstone.

The comparison with James Joyce is not so far-fetched as it may sound. True, their poetry is very different, though not opposed, in tone, mood, and subject matter. And so, apparently, is their prose.

The differences are apparent enough: Joyce left Dublin and juggled with all the cultures of the world; Stephens, except for excursions, remained at home and confined himself largely to his native heritage. But both are interested in a present that is a palimpsest of the past; neither could, nor tried to, escape the infectious but inimitable speech-rhythms that were theirs by divine right of Irish birth; and Joyce once declared that, should "Finnegans Wake" be unfinished at the time of his death, there was one man in the world who might be able to complete it, and that man was James Stephens. (Both were born the same day and year in Dublin.)

It is partly his native speech-rhythms that make it unnecessary for

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Stephens to invent new forms. He can take whatever is ready to hand and by his power of song reanimate it. "The Centaurs" leaps with all the energy of its subject. (I quote from "Collected Poems," 1926. Since then, Stephens has published two other books of verse: "Strict Joy," 1931, and "Kings and the Moon," 1938.)

Playing upon the hill three centaurs were!
They lifted each a hoof! They stared at me
And stamped the dust!

They stamped the dust! They snuffed upon the air!
And all their movements had the fierce glee
Of power, and pride, and lust!

Of power and pride and lust! Then, with a shout,
They tossed their heads, and wheeled, and galloped round,
In furious brotherhood!

In furious brotherhood! Around, about,
They charged, they swerved, they leaped! Then, bound on bound,
They raced into the wood!

The pace of this poem is set by its reversed refrain. Ordinarily a refrain, ending each stanza with the same line, induces a reminiscent pause. Here, by repeating the last line of each stanza at the beginning of the next, he lashes the rhythm. The poem ends at such breakneck speed that the centaurs have disappeared before we have had time to disbelieve in them. Since they have vanished, they must have been there. So, although Stephens gives the impression of working in traditional forms, he is far from orthodox. He does not mind, in "The Market," combining ballad metre and sonnet structure:

A man said to me at the fair
—If you have got a poet's tongue
Tumble up and chant the air
That the Stars of Morning sung:

—I'll pay you, if you sing it nice,
A penny-piece.—I answered flat,
—Sixpence is the proper price
For a ballad such as that.—

But he stared and wagged his head,
Growling as he passed along
—Sixpence! Why I'd see you dead
Before I pay that for a song.—

I saw him buy three pints of stout
With the sixpence—dirty lout!

And if Stephens had not told us, we should certainly take for contemporary his adaptations from Raftery, O'Rahilly, and others of the Gaelic poets. No less scholarly and free are his adaptations from childhood, as in "Midnight":

(*Continued on page* 42)

The Harlem Renaissance

ARNA BONTEMPS

NEW books of poems by Langston Hughes and Countée Cullen have appeared this year. Some readers, no doubt, will be reminded of the shy, disarming bows made by these new writers before literary circles back in the twenties, when neither of them had yet finished college. In the case of Cullen, who died a year ago January, there will be a tendency to summarize as well as reflect. His stature as a poet will be estimated. With Hughes, of course, only a tentative and partial measurement can be attempted. But whatever evaluations may follow, whatever ranks and positions may finally fall to them in American literature, there isn't likely to be much question about their importance to the Harlem renaissance, so well remembered by many. They were its heralds and its brightest stars.

Except for their ages (there was a difference of about a year) and the fact that each was a Negro American, they were not much alike. An observer got the impression that while they were drawn together by the common experience of writing poetry, they actually had remarkably little in common. Their personal backgrounds, their reading, their moods, their attitudes, their tastes and preferences —everything one saw in their personalities was different. Even when they wrote poems on identical subjects, as in Cullen's "Epitaph for a Poet" and Hughes's "The Dreamkeeper," the contrast was striking. Cullen's stanza goes:

I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth.
And laid them away in a box of gold!
Where long will cling the lips of the moth,
I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth;

ON THESE I STAND. By Countee Cullen. New York: Harper & Bros. 1947. 197 pp. $2.50.
FIELDS OF WONDER. By Langston Hughes. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1947. 115 pp. $2.50.

I hide no hate; I am not even wroth
Who found earth's breath so keen and cold.
I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth,
And laid them away in a box of gold.

Hughes put the same idea in these words:

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

Cullen's verses skip; those by Hughes glide. But in life Hughes is the merry one. Cullen was a worrier. If these traits in the two poets stood out with less emphasis in the days of cultural and artistic awakening among Negroes, twenty-odd years ago, they were nevertheless present. Equally evident, then as later, was Cullen's tendency to get his inspiration, his rhythms and patterns as well as much of his substance from books and the world's lore of scholarship; while Hughes made a ceremony of standing on the deck of a tramp steamer and tossing into the sea, one by one, all the books he had accumulated before his twenty-first birthday. He need not have done it, of course, for he had never been chained to any tradition, and there isn't the least danger that he ever will be; yet this stern renunciation was in keeping with his old habit of using living models and taking poetic forms as well as content from folk sources.

Cullen was in many ways an old-fashioned poet. He never ventured very far from the Methodist parsonage in which he grew up in New York. A foster child, drawn into this shelter at an early age, he continued to cherish it gratefully. He paid his adopted parents a devotion, one is almost inclined to say a submission, only rarely rendered by natural sons. But it was all a part of his own choice. He did not stand in fear of his foster parents. He simply preferred pleasing them to having his own way. It is possible that he felt or imagined the cords of this relationship to be the kind that would not stand strain, but the decisions he made later do not seem to support such an idea.

By the time he was half way through DeWitt Clinton High School, Countée Cullen had written at least one of the poems on which his repu-

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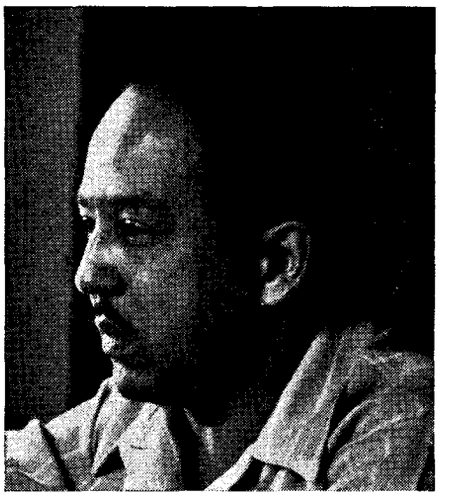
tation was to be built. Those readers who now complain of Pre-Raphaelite Victorian echoes in his work, perhaps find significance in the fact that the composition was called "I Have a Rendezvous with Life" and that it was offered by the eager youngster "with apologies to the memory of Alan Seeger." At the time it came to notice, however, after winning a city-wide poetry prize for high school students, most responses were enthusiastic. Ministers in prominent pulpits took the poem as a text and preached sermons on it. Editorials quoted it. A cheerful shout went up.

Here, some voices cried, was a poetic voice—a Negro at that—who thought that life was good. Here was a fledgling singer, praise God, who gave you a tune you could hum. A Cullen rooting section, consisting mainly of readers who had little truck with most of the new poetry, stood by anxiously. A year or two passed. Cullen became a conspicuous high school graduate, took home medals and ribbons galore, and went to college fully dedicated to literature. He continued to be a good student—good enough, in fact, for Phi Beta Kappa—but his pride was in his poetry.

About half of his "best poems" were written while he was a student of New York University, and it was during these years that he first came up for consideration as an authentic American writer, the goal to which he aspired. Up at "The Dark Tower," a gathering place of awakened Harlem, the very name of which was taken from one of Cullen's sonnets, there was never any doubt that he would make it. At the *Opportunity* banquets, where prizes were awarded by that once-influential magazine in order to encourage the efforts of new Negro writers, it was taken for granted that Cullen was in. Before he finished college, his poems had been published in a dozen or more magazines, including *The Nation, Poetry, The American Mercury,* and *Harper's.* "Color," the first collection of these lyrics, made a solid impression in 1925, the year in which Cullen celebrated his twenty-second birthday, and "Copper Sun" and "The Ballad of the Brown Girl," both presenting more of his undergraduate output, followed in 1926 and 1928. Meanwhile, the young poet went abroad on a Guggenheim Fellowship, perhaps, as much as anything else, to take stock.

His stay in France was extended a year beyond his original plans, but even that wasn't long enough. His springtime leaves had fallen, and he was still waiting for a new season to bring another yield. He kept writing as a matter of habit, and the little shelf of his books increased steadily,

—*Carl Van Vechten.*



—*Griffith J. Davis.*

Countee Cullen derived his inspiration, rhythms, patterns, and substance from books . . . while Langston Hughes once made a ceremony of tossing all his books in the sea.

but that wasn't the real thing; that wasn't what he was waiting for. A decade later he wrote to a friend: "My muse is either dead or taking a twenty-year sleep."

Notice was paid, on a more limited scale, to the adolescent writing of Langston Hughes. In his case this happened to consist of delightfully innocent little pieces like "Dressed Up," perhaps inspired by a childhood fondness for the work of Paul Laurence Dunbar. They appeared in the school publications of Central High in Cleveland, and it is unlikely that anyone used them as texts for sermons in those days. To achieve that special distinction, Hughes had to wait until a number of years later when, in a moment of puzzlement, no doubt, he composed and allowed to be published a little item called "Good-bye, Christ," which not only misrepresented himself, in the light of his total writing, but caused him to be misinterpreted, denounced, and abused from dozens of rostrums and platforms, picketed by the followers of Amy McPherson and the supporters of Gerald L. K. Smith, and derided before the nation in newspapers and magazines.

Mainly, however, the response to Hughes's early writing was neither sudden nor spontaneous. Even "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," a poem written in the weeks following his graduation from high school and which few people in any part of the world have been able to read without feeling, caught on slowly. It was hard for those readers who noticed a new Negro poet at that time to know what to make of a young man who wrote what he called a "Suicide's Note," saying:

The calm,
Cool face of the river
Asked me for a kiss.

Was this a poem or not? There was another one that said only:

I loved my friend.
He went away from me.
There is nothing more to say.

If these were puzzling to people whose reading experiences had been formal and conservative, the one which began:

My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black,

was downright shocking. So was the free verse work in which Hughes insisted that a clean spittoon is "beautiful to the Lord." His preoccupation with low life, with the singers of blues, with rounders and cabaret girls, with the misery and exaltation of road workers and of shouting church folk bothered even those who had found something which they could admire in his "Fantasy in Purple" or his "Dream Variation." Nevertheless there were those who felt, even then, that this poet of broad human sympathies, this writer of effortless, almost casual, verses, this singer with an ear for street music and for the folk idioms of our modern urbanization was indeed an American original.

THE career which began with the magazine publication of "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" in 1921 yielded "The Weary Blues," a first book of poems, in 1926, and Langston Hughes, home from world wanderings, found his lines being used as touchstones of an awakening movement. His poems were set to music, they were painted, they were danced. They were recited, they were interpreted, they were translated—the Latin Americans are particularly fond of them. They were dramatized, they were recorded, they were imitated. To rest and perhaps

(*Continued on page* 44)

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A Wild Goose*

LIFE AND THE DREAM. By Mary Colum. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1947. 454 pp. + Index. $3.50.

Reviewed by R. ELLIS ROBERTS

TO have supremely the twin gifts of criticism and enthusiasm is a rare thing; and it is her possession of them which makes Mrs. Colum's autobiography one of the loveliest and most exciting books of recollection I have read. She has other virtues, too, not common in literary reminiscences—a good observant eye for the salient qualities in people, a natural kindness, a lack of egotism and vanity and, when a fight is on, a spirit of fairness, and an appreciation of the stand and the skill of the opponent.

Careful and stingy people will be shocked at the waste in "Life and the Dream"; Mrs. Colum has sacrificed here, in her Irish generosity, the material for half-a-dozen novels, three or four autobiographies, and several full-length biographical studies; and a reviewer, confined to his poor stint of words, may well be in despair to give even adequate treatment to such riches. All through the book the imaginative memory is at work; the facts, the dreams, the ambitions of the writer are so transferred to language that no reader can fail to share them. If, as this reader does, he finds them congruous to his own dream world and, in part, to his world of fact, the fascination, the sense of participation becomes overwhelming.

Mary Colum is from Ulster and a Catholic. She belongs to that famous family of Gunnings, noted in the eighteenth century and since for courage and beauty. She was early orphaned, and she has needed courage —though she never hints at such a need—since her childhood. The first eighty-odd pages of her book tell the story of her life in the Irish country, of her education at convent schools in Ireland, France, and Germany. This record has an astonishingly evocative force, and is written with a wisdom and understanding in most refreshing contrast to the records of many people subjected to a discipline often uncongenial, hide-bound, and —in Ireland at least — physically harmful. When she was eighteen years old she went to Dublin to the University. When she got on the Dublin train she was "attired in my new blue ankle-length dress, my dead mother's watch fastened to a long chain and stuck in my belt. Attached to the chain was a silver Child of Mary medal and a little silver cross." One of the first things she saw as she was driving to her residence house was "the figure of a down-at-heel, trampish-looking man walking slowly across O'Connell Bridge with billboards attached to his back and front." He was advertising a week of Irish plays at the Abbey Theatre—plays by J. M. Synge, W. B. Yeats, and Lady Gregory. From that time all her leisure from studies was spent in helping the new Irish literary and theatrical movement. She is writing now of men and women whom I knew, some well, some slightly — Yeats, A. E., J. M. Synge, George Moore, Maude Gonne, Lady Gregory, Roger Casement, the Meynell family, Mrs. Despard; I have read all the plays written for the Irish theatre, seen them acted whenever I could, and have read most if not all that has been written on the movement. Yet Mrs. Colum's vivid, personal account, gay, enthusiastic, is as fresh as if the subject was a new one.

A great strength is her sense of character; and she has wit without malice, great insight, and the fairness springing, not from indifference but from an inclusive heart. She's a darling umpire. The portraits of Yeats, Lady Gregory, A. E., Maude Gonne could not be better. I don't always agree with her, however; I never found Lady Gregory a snob; and surely it is only the complimentary ruthlessness of the young which prevents her from seeing that Lady Gregory, then fifty-seven or more, did not appear at the Dublin literary evenings because she wanted to husband her strength!

Mrs. Colum's account—a few sentences were printed in Hone's "Life of Yeats"—of the great battle over "The Playboy of the Western World" is a fine, epic piece of writing. She rightly stresses the extravagance with which Yeats would spend himself in a battle for a cause or a friend. He was the only passionate orator I have heard, except in the pulpit, who was always reasonable. Many of his friends will echo Mrs. Colum's statement:

> I never knew a greater mind or a greater man, one with such all-round endowments, such a variety of intellectual interests, or more generosity about another's gifts. He was always overpraising his friends; some of his swans were certainly geese; but, at the same time, if anybody injured or hurt him or someone close to him, he never forgot or forgave it. He was the most all-round Irish of all the Irish poets, not so much for the material he used, but for his expression of all sorts of innate emotions, attitudes, psychic qualities, racial ideas, Celtic chivalries.

Mrs. Colum might have added to that list his loyalty to family, loyalty which did not preclude violent quarreling. He and I often differed, but the color of his friendliness was changed as soon as we discovered we were, in some way, remote cousins.

Padraic Colum was one of the most authentic of Yeats's swans—a "sensitive, naturally dreaming man." When he and Mary married in 1914 they came to America on a second honeymoon to visit Mr. Colum's aunt in Pittsburgh. Except for visits to Europe and Ireland they have lived in America since then. I don't say "made their home," for in a book as cheerful as it is courageous there is one sad sentence: "I feel an exile always, everywhere, including the land in which I was born"; and another, even sadder, on her approach to Hawaii, where

> the islands rise out of the sea, mountains, lovely, gilt with sunshine, exotic, yet vaguely disappointing, as all things looked forward to are when reached.

I have left small space to write of the larger part of "Life and the Dream": the wisdom and wit of the book deepen, if anything, as Mrs. Colum writes of her friends in this country. It is the kindness of people here which most impresses her as, I believe, it does most visitors from Europe. She and her husband have known most of their contemporaries in arts and letters: there is a most touching account of the young Hart Crane, some appreciative pages on Vachel Lindsay, a lovely melancholy vignette of Elinor Wylie, a most entertaining sketch of Harriet Monroe, and a superb piece of critical fun in an account of Hendrik van Loon, and Van Wyck Brooks's defense of him. The chapters on the visit to Hawaii, on Paris in 1930, on luncheon at the White House, are masterpieces.

From the time of St. Patrick, through the days of the Wild Geese, through the black years of the Famine, by choice or by force, the people of Ireland have gone out to other lands and given the countries of their residence a wealth not otherwise to be had. In this century J. B. Yeats and the Colums, exiles, have made others feel at home in a world of imaginative ideas which, but for these visitors, they might never have entered. And, believe Mary Colum, the introduction was not always as easy as you might think; but it's often been fun, often a delight, always worth the doing.

* *A Wild Goose, the name given to those Irish who took arms and fought in the armies of many other countries.*

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The Problem of Patchen

JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER

FIVE volumes,* bearing the name Patchen, lie on my desk for reviewing. They were issued December 2, January 13, February 1, and February 3. Four of these books are by Kenneth Patchen and one, issued simultaneously with the second on the list of the Patchen books, is by Henry Miller. I have read and pondered them several times. Any one taken alone is somewhat of a puzzle; taken together they constitute a problem. That problem consists in separating what is of real worth from the uninhibited and undisciplined flood that issues from the conscious and subconscious of Mr. Patchen's psyche, and of evaluating what remains. This problem might be approached from the standpoint of various and valid literary traditions, from the standpoint of language, from the standpoint of character as it applies to the artist. Any thorough approach of this kind calls for a long article. I must attempt what is possible within the confines of a review.

Let us look first at Henry Miller's "Patchen, Man of Anger and Light." In a lively prose that leans toward the melodramatic, and with a mixture of true insights and exaggerated distortions, Henry Miller gives us a portrait of a man who, in his own words, is both "a sincere assassin" with "no manners, no grace, no tact" and, at the same time, "a gentle prince who suffers at the mention of the slightest cruelty." Reading Patchen, "whose works defy classification" (and whose writings are liberally interspersed with drawings and oddities of the type-setter's skill that we thought had gone out with the Da-daists) makes one—Mr. Miller at least—"think of Blake, of Lautremont, of Picasso—and of Jacob Boehme. Also of Savonarola, of Grunewald, of John of Patmos, of Hieronymous Bosch and," adds Mr. Miller with winning candor, "of times, events, and scenes recognizable only in the waiting rooms of sleep." "How

—Robin Carson.

Kenneth Patchen, self-styled as an assassin without grace and as a gentle prince who suffers at the slightest cruelty.

does it come about," he asks, referring to the "Journal of Albion Moonlight," which I have not read, "that I have the temerity and audacity to write this letter to a figure of your earth-shaking stature?" Such abject worship, such vast comparisons and clinical aspects of the literary problem might well intimidate any reviewer were it not for a few words near the beginning of this panegyric which may give a clue: "He puts one on tenterhooks . . . breeds hysteria." One thinks, gratefully holding on to sanity and reason, of Robert Frost's "No tears in writer, no tears in the reader," and concludes this holds good for hysteria as well. For while Miller tells us that Patchen is an invalid, suffering and often bed-ridden with arthritis, we cannot, remembering many illustrious writing men who were by no means physically hale, and despite all human compassion, make illness the yardstick for considering this body of work. Nor, I feel sure, would Mr. Patchen want to be given quarter on the grounds of physical disability.

But with Mr. Miller's charge of hysteria I must, perforce, agree, for this quality becomes all too clear when reading Mr. Patchen's own books. Of an hysteric we say that, under stress which other dispositions accept either stoically, angrily, cheerfully, or with stubborn opposition, he, the hysteric, "goes to pieces." This is precisely the effect one gets from reading these various books of poetry and prose and from looking at their illustrations. Faced with the problem of our complex and chaotic world, Mr. Patchen, in regarding them, is not serene in the knowledge of invisible realities, nor does he project a better world of the imagination, neither has he a program of revolt; he goes to pieces. Let me say at once that the writings of mystics, those great souls capable of ecstasy and what is sometimes, either rightly or wrongly, called hysterics, is not to be confused with hysteric writing. For granted that they too flew to pieces, they had also that spiritual energy and control that enabled them by a reverse motion, as it were, to draw back their own fragments revitalized after they had gone out of themselves, and to give us some notion of their experience made divinely whole, and divinely made art. But when Mr. Patchen faces crises in thinking or experience he most often breaks down from frustration into the profane or obscene.

Since I find the prose writings less rewarding than the poetry I shall dismiss them first. "They Keep Riding Down All the Time," with its cover design that apparently was born from an unequal mating of Chagall's imagination and Patchen's rudimentary craftsmanship, is an unconnected account, something like jottings in a diary, of a man's and a girl's sojourn together by the sea. Into it come persons sometimes realistically, sometimes symbolically portrayed, and what I must suppose to be an animal of the imagination, a kind of water kangaroo with its pouch on its hindside, for I cannot find the word "ybodse" in the dictionary. The meaning of the title is indicated by the angel on the cover, who comes to each and all as the messenger of fate.

FOR this fate which is so often sheerly unbearable Mr. Patchen has great compassion but no suggestion of how to meet it, either on physical or spiritual terms. He rails against the world as it is, just as if he were not a small part of it; he rails against the fate of the artist, just as if he had no part in his election; he is *he*, and the rest of the world is *they*. There is but one remedy—to hide his face on the breast of his beloved. He makes attempts at other kinds of communion but they are not successful, because his imagination is not powerful enough to go beyond his own ego and achieve identity with the other. In "Panels for the Walls of Heaven" the theme is much the same but with more anguish and more hysteria. Had Mr. Patchen added thought to his obvious emotion, had he been able to

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* *SELECTED POEMS. By Kenneth Patchen. New York: New Directions.* 1946. 86 *pp.* $1.50.

THEY KEEP RIDING DOWN ALL THE TIME. By Kenneth Patchen. New York: Padell. 1947. 32 *pp.* $1.

PATCHEN, MAN OF ANGER AND LIGHT. By Henry Miller. New York: Padell. 32 *pp.* $1.

PANELS FOR THE WALLS OF HEAVEN. By Kenneth Patchen. Berkeley, Calif.: Bern Porter. 1947. 67 *pp.* $4.50.

PICTURES OF LIFE AND DEATH. By Kenneth Patchen. New York: Padell. 1947. 32 *pp.* $1.

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analyze the feeling that makes him find surcease in his mate, he might have made a real contribution to contemporary poetic thought. I shall enlarge on this when I come to the poetry.

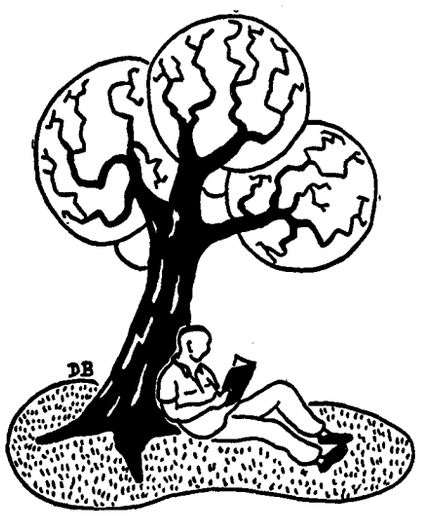
New Directions has made a selection from six previous volumes of poetry which were published from 1936 through 1945. Reading through these selected poems that often show Patchen as a poet of gifts, one would like to urge on him the search that Keats made his earnest preoccupation —the search for integration. For although at times we are captivated by some of these poems, inevitably the seriously whimsical lines of Alfred Kreymborg come to mind:

I am four monkeys
.....
How many monkeys are you?

Here, side by side with poems of high seriousness, are puerile cartoons and essays in an argot that another Kenneth—Kenneth Fearing—manages much better. Fearing has put his own stamp on "hardboiled" language. With it he projects messages of savage irony and force. But when Kenneth Patchen tries to be tough he succeeds only in being gauche. The animal ferocity akin to toughness does not suit him. And these poems reveal qualities in Mr. Patchen that make us wish he would turn from his Darwinian to his divine inheritance.

Just as in the drawings one saw traces of Picasso, Klee, Chagall, and others, so the poems show imperfectly assimilated influences of such widely different writers as Cummings and Sandburg, Joyce, and even Maxwell Bodenheim. Yet, Patchen has a quality deeply his own, a poetic quality rare in our time: the gift of masculine tenderness. If, as I intimated before, he could explore this trait in himself, if he could show that the root of the modern malaise is in the primal relationship between man and woman, if he could show that there where society begins it might again be made good, then he would add a major contribution to our literature. For it is not only in the love songs that his tenderness shines out with reassuring light; in poems like "The Fox" and "The Deer and the Snake" it radiates an all-embracing, almost mystical love.

His themes are various. Provocative pieces, such as "Do the Dead Know What Time It Is?" and "I Don't Want to Startle You," would have been more effective as short stories, and one of his strongest poems, "Nice Day for a Lynching," recalls Ridgely Torrence's unforgettable "The Bird and the Tree," a poem on the same theme.



Whereas Mr. Torrence maintains a magical tension between the horror of his theme and the harmony of its exposition, Patchen's looser structure moves us no less deeply because he communicates his sense of guilty participation with such urgency as to include the reader in the participation of the drama and the guilt. The fantasy of "The Origin of Baseball," in contrast to the spontaneous and even improvised effect of his verses, sounds contrived; but that of "The Rites of Darkness" achieves a symbolic significance and an innocent wildness that flashes from the best of his lyrics.

Contrary to popular conception, a poet must be shrewd. Not, of course, in the sense of meanness or cunning self-seeking, but in the sense of being a keen discerner of values. On these values, on their relative worths, and on his sound heart—should he have been able to retain or regain it—his commitments will be made, his taste formed. Patchen's taste is not formed. Otherwise he would never have perpetrated such tasteless verses as "Birthday Greetings for W. (Churchill) and his Pals" and other sections both in prose and verse. Such lapses reveal, besides other things, the lack of a vocabulary flexible and elegant enough to express all his moods at a poetic level. While he may, as his admirers claim, possess a real spark of genius, his talent is inadequate, thus far, consistently to catch this spark and blow it to a flame. Actually he tends toward the idealistic, even the idyllic: here he is at his best. Many lyrics of this kind cry out for quotation, but I choose the opening, dedicatory lines which make me think of Hölderlin's "Half of Life." These are untitled and, but for the three repeated short "i" sounds in the third line, perfect.

The sea is awash with roses O they blow
Upon the land.

The still hills fill with their scent
O the hills flow on their sweetness
As on God's hand.

O love, it is so little we know of pleasure
Pleasure that lasts as the snow.

But the sea is awash with roses O they blow
Upon the land.

"Pictures of Life and Death" contains nothing that seems to me to be an advance over the earlier lyrics. Many are allegorical, filled with giants, horses, wolves, children, and queens, but the symbolism is cloudy and not sustained. Patchen experiments, but mostly with the innovations of his predecessors. The following, which he has labeled "Vinegar and Roses," is characteristic of his latest volume:

Blocks, Chains. Gray blocks covered
With horses. Trees sweat. Pools of

Crushed larks bloody cities. But there is food
There is eating one's self. And there is truth
But it sounds like a lie. Life,
But the dead can't live it. Who have killed Men.
And the noble beautiful grim words of men.
(—— The tunes of poems like tin whistles in a cyclone.)

Truth is a lie unless men live it!
O break out of all these goddam boxes—
The sticky neat tunes—All the songs I hear
Are coming straight out of hell.

Here the poetry is in the pity, and the pity of it is that, in a man of Patchen's potentialities, it is not there more often.

Jean Starr Untermeyer is a well-known poet, a singer who made her debut in Vienna and London, and translator not only of Oscar Bie's life of Schubert, but also of Hermann Broch's masterpiece, "The Death of Virgil." She also held the Ford Madox Ford Chair of Creative Literature at Olivet College, 1940.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 677)

PRIESTLEY:
*G.B.S. SOCIAL CRITIC**

The Victorian Age was filled with giants and junk. The last Victorian giant was a red-bearded Irishman, who put a match to the junk and . . . sauntered away, chuckling, fully aware of the Mephistophelian effect of the leaping flames.

*From the volume of tributes "In Honor of the Ninetieth Birthday of George Bernard Shaw," sponsored by *The Saturday Review of Literature* as a souvenir of the occasion.

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Well Above Average

THE QUIET CENTER. By Edith Henrich. New York: William Sloane Associates. 1946. 73 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by SARA HENDERSON HAY

MRS. HENRICH'S first book is a collection of quiet, thoughtful, well-turned poems. If, as the title implies, this is "the quiet center at the heart of the storm," there is little indication of any storm itself. There was nothing that struck me, as I read, with that indefinable but unmistakable emotional impact which stabs the spirit broad awake. There was, rather, a comfortable acquiescence, a pleasant agreement with the unexciting and more or less conventional statements Mrs. Henrich has to make about the beauty and poignancy of nature, of the human need to identify oneself with a well-loved landscape, of man's vulnerability and his pathetic and courageous efforts to secure for himself some amulet of faith against oblivion.

He fits his wings to climb as eagles climb;
He fetches constellations in a mirror
but time escapes him; time is unleashed terror;
He is an animal obsessed by time.
He has no instrument to hold it with
except his counted pulse, his measured breath.

The trouble is, I think, that much of what Mrs. Henrich says so fluently and well has been said before, in much the same way. It is said there is no new thing under the sun, but there are still new variants of old truths, new ways of looking at or saying old things. I find in these poems much to praise in their grace and precision and expert craftsmanship, but little that is startling in its originality or freshness of approach. They are technically excellent, often beautifully phrased, but I feel somehow that Mrs. Henrich is too restrained, too limited in poetic intensity and that she should heed the advice given once by a fine teacher to a young poet, "Let your insides write for you." It was more elegantly put, I believe, as "look in your heart, and write."

If this comment seems overcritical towards work which is really well above average, it is because "of him who hath much, much shall be required." Mrs. Henrich has genuine talent, a quick eye, an ear for the musical phrase and the vivid metaphor. Her work has a smooth excellence, a traditionally satisfying pattern of thought and expression. But I like her best in her un-poetically-self-conscious moments, in the small glimpses of herself when she looks at the world about her and makes her own spontaneous comments:

Earth's shadow does not fall, it fills
the hollows first, then climbs the hills. . . .

Every tree grows up alone
between the earth and sky
as though its separateness were what
the Lord would judge it by. . . .

and when, as in the poem, "Morning," she combines the observation of the inner and the outer eye in a beautifully balanced whole:

Morning is lifting slowly out of darkness,
white as devotion, sky-wide, without knowing
how like belief is the implicit outward motion of growing.

Shape is restored at dawn to object singly
as though each separate thing were beautiful
because of its existence, difference seeming to be the soul.

Solids are whole again as though discovered
with love, with hands; dimensions are made clear

As though it were an act of faith;
the circle becomes the sphere.

"Edith Henrique has genuine talent, a quick eye, an ear for the musical phrase."

Color is new upon each sunlit surface;
lifting lines are reimbursed with flight;
cool and level lie the planes of morning
covered with light.

Slow as belief is all awakening;
the groping leaf, the groping hand, the blind
blood groping out of chaos toward whatever
pattern it can find.

Keepsakes from Quinault

By Dorothy Alyea

I.

I HAVE brought berries on a grape-leaf.
It is a slight gift, but my hands were scratched for it.
Under the hemlocks the path was cool
But the clearing smelled of blackberries,
And spruce-chips where the loggers had been.
There were bees with orange bags and the sound of a woodpecker,
And a goldfinch on a clump of thistle.
Vines over dead trees led me by trails of moss
Upward until I could watch the sea.
I have brought you a gift. Come away from these people.
The ripest fruit you must eat from the spray.

II.

I have found you an agate.
Ten gulls were bathing where the brook crossed the sand,
Ankling like pink-foot children through a wave.
The sand was a mirror. I walked on sky-color,
Hunting for this stone.
Feathers of mist circled inland from a fog-bank,
Threatening like Aladdin's genii.
Thousands of pebbles, green, blue, rose, distracted me,
Driftwood curled into dogs' heads,
Shells of sand-dollars,
Sea-weed for baskets, not what I wanted.
The world turned grey before I found this,
Ugly but transparent.
Polished, it will have the look of your eyes,
Gold-glowing, sea-colored,
Looking as if there were always a fine sunset,
Hung with gay clouds.

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Columbus, 1947

ELIZABAETH LOMAX

SIRE, I have returned.

I have come home from the Ocean Sea,
Home from that voyage that each of us must make,
The voyage of exploration upon the dark uncharted waters
That lie between the lost islands of our childhood
And these broad continents of your domain.
I have come home from that Enterprise
Whose only authorization was an urgent hunger,
A great restlessness,
An irresistible craving for far off places.

Sire, it has been long.

And I have been afraid.
And I have been lost.
And there were times when I did not think I would return.
I have floundered in the Sargasso Sea of bewilderment.
I have languished in the doldrums of disenchantment.
I have been driveh by the hurricanes of rage and frustration.
I have been scorched in the Gulf Stream of hot joy and sorrow.
And I have been washed in the Arctic Current of cold science.

Yes, Sire, I have returned.

Do not ask me, Sire, for gold, nor precious stones.
For I can put into your hands only these worthless jewels:
The pale orient pearl of dawn breaking over the world;
The lustrous emerald islands embossing the sea;
The bright wash of gold through the clear air of hot countries;
The shimmering opals of humming birds,
And the opals of many eyes flashing from love to hate,
Iridescent with dreams;
The rubies of fleeting poppied afternoons,
Of wine drunk, and love imbibed.
Of lips, those rubric first pages in the book of love.
And I have brought back these diamonds:
The terrible, pitiless eyes of children,
Seeing things as they are,
And the hoarfrosts of death
Riming every head.

Do not ask me, Sire, for their handicrafts,
Their artifacts, their foods, their customs,
Their silken rugs and spices.
For I have brought back only these:
The wondrous, worthless, fat apples of cashew nuts;
The silk of summer clouds and beds of love;
The gauze of spring rains and tears;
The silver bells of quick footsteps and of laughter;
The dappling confetti of pigeons among the roof pots;
The foolish holiday formality of orange groves;
The arrowroot and the yams of everyday fare
And of monotony;
The pink, firm footed abalone flesh of virginity;
The hot peppercorns of temper;
The red pepper pods of jealousy
And of madness;
The asafedita, the ginseng and the marijuana
Of bruised and broken hearts;
The melting song of caged birds;
The roar of wild beasts in the night;
The brilliant scherzo flight of a thousand parrots in the jungle;
The cruel punishment of waves on the wild Pacific Coast;
The slow motion poem of sharks swimming in a sun-filled breaker;
The sluggish seasonal Bacchanalia of crocodiles in the Tierra Caliente;
The orgiastic scattering of seed in a high wind.

Do not ask me, Sire, for the names of their cities and their rivers.
For I can recall no name but El Dorado.
They have strange names for their cities,
And they are always razing them,
And building them up again.

Do not ask me to tell you the names of their rulers and their gods.
For I can only repeat to you a fragment of Mumbo Jumbo,
A few muttered lines from the litany,
A broken gabble gabble of voodoo,
A terrible heehawing of Jesus Only.
I can refer you to a book of Black Magic,
A Manual of Prejudice,
A Learner's Hand Book of Superstition,
Brutality, Deception, Greed, Violence and Torture.

Do not ask me to tell you of their common people:
Their fetters,
Their sorrows, their sacrifices, their crucifixions.
For I should never finish this Revelation.
And I should fall down at your feet for sorrow.

These things they are learning slowly:
That all men on earth may be fed;
That they may be clothed;
That they may be born and grow up and live and die
In health and peace.
These things they have never learned:
The answer to the Devil's Nine Questions;
Which road leads into Paradise;
How to keep one child from being born an idiot,
Another a clubfoot;
The riddle of seed and the riddle of growth;
How to forge an Armor against the Ugly Sniper.

Do not ask me where they came from,
Nor where they are going.
I saw their fossils,
Their calendar stones,
The gallant scribbling they call their science.
I heard their runes, their myths, their legends,
Their tall talk of life after death.
They have their River Jordan,
Their Garden of Allah,
Their Walhalla,
Their Happy Hunting Ground,
Their Guinea,
Their Green Pastures.
But I brought back with me only one rune from that voyage,
One magic whispering, one occult message.

Put your ear to the seashell of the human heart.
Trace its wise and spiralling pattern,
Its deep and muffled roar:
A billion tongues speaking from the Sea of all the ages,
Crying out hope and glory, hope and glory,
Hope and glory for us.
How? When?
This is the beginning and the end of all voyages.

Sire, this is the voyage.

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Brilliant Young Poet

THE IRON PASTORAL. By John Frederick Nims. New York: William Sloane Associates. 1947. 86 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

WITHOUT wishing to fasten the kiss of death, from a much older and more conservative poet, upon the vivid first book of a young and vigorous one, the work of John Frederick Nims seems to me to rank high among modern verse. It is impressionistic, expressionistic, and its figurative language, though highly original, is usually a language I can understand. The jammed metaphors of much modern poetry are infrequent. Extravagance is here, as when, in the opening lines of "Poolroom" the bottoms of babies are spoken of as "little kelsons"! But then Donne was extravagant, and so was Shakespeare for that matter. I have been looking into a rewarding study of the structure of poetry, Cleanth Brooks's "The Well Wrought Urn," and pluck from it the fact that textual critics have forever been trying to explain away the fact that when, in "Macbeth," Shakespeare wrote, "their daggers/Unmannerly breech'd with gore," he actually saw those daggers covered with blood as with breeches! Even as he spoke of Duncan's "silver skin lac'd with his golden blood," and thereby added to the clothing images in "Macbeth," so exhaustively probed by a certain Miss Spurgeon (United Garment Workers please note!).

A good poet is sometimes more inclined toward extravagance than a mediocre one; and Mr. Nims is a good poet. Ordinarily his sense of balance and sense of humor do not fail him. When in the poem "Race Riot," concerning the sins of Detroit, he refers to Coughlin's antics as when "that notorious tongue/Spat frenzy's gospel on the purchased air," he is in the Shakespearean tradition, though this is hardly one of his best lines, even if I applaud its sense and spirit. All the more so, since Mr. Nims, I believe, speaks as a Catholic. But he is not a devotional poet. He writes of a penny arcade, an all-night lunchroom, a Colt Automatic, a football game, a magazine stand, among other things; and his poem "Christmas Tree" is chiefly concerned with the outward and visible sign. A most modern line in "Football Game" is "O'Reilly fades, a Merlin shoulder priming," which condenses a reference to the marvelous dexterity of a super-passer; and when the fingers of one Johnson "cull the rough projectile down," the poet has gone the sports writer one better.

—James Hargie Connelly.

John Frederick Nims uses "the language of poetry, paradox, raying allusiveness."

But what Mr. Nims does is what many modern poets try to do and fail. His original phraseology succeeds in placing you inside his poem, rather than merely putting you on the spot. His language is more vivid than that of the late Imagists, even though he often deals in rhyme and metre. To me a line like "The butterfly's eccentric bounce on air," in another poem, describes precisely what the butterfly is seen to do when closely observed. As for "Content," the intimations (not of immortality) in his bitter "Apocalypse" ripple wide. In "Poem for Your Eye, Dante," there is a passage that in a way makes use of the Chestertonian suggestion that modern imagery use modern things. For an illustration of how Mr. Nims can take matters as current as newspaper items and make them poetry:

> The boy in the midnight special round the bend
> Who sees a headlight on the single track
> Swelling and near—his heart flies up away;
> The pilot cabined in a whining dive
> Watching the world grow large and photo-clear,
> The meadow rocking up, the drunken barn,
> The farmer pale and running, this is peace—
> Quiet of queer midocean where the jaws
> Of luminous lamprey, long as subways, hunt;
> Quiet of stars, fire engines reeling red
> And shocking the lonely highways of the sky,
> Whose influence felt a hundred hours away
> Darkens all schedule of the sponsored air.

This is the language of poetry, of paradox, and raying allusiveness. And there is variousness in this volume. Consider the brilliant "Non-Euclidean Elegy"! To say more would, perhaps, be to say too much. But I wish that Will Shakespeare, such a master of vivid wildness of language, might cast an eye over it. (No comparison made or intended!)

Your Literary I.Q.

By Howard Collins

LAST LINES OF SONNETS

This week's quiz is for that exclusive group of poetry lovers who read sonnets all the way through to the last line. They are invited to match up the twenty last lines listed below with the names of the poets who wrote them. Allowing five points for each correct answer, a score of fifty is par, sixty is very good, and seventy or better is excellent. Answers are on page 42.

1. All losses are restored and sorrows end.	( ) Arnold
2. And all that mighty heart is lying still!	( ) Blunt
3. And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!	( ) Brooke
4. And Heaven and Hell may meet—yet never we.	( ) Browning
5. And must I lose a soul's inheritance?	( ) Byron
6. And round their narrow lips the mold falls close.	( ) Cullen
7. And then you suddenly cried, and turned away.	( ) Donne
8. Even if we cease life is a miracle.	( ) Drayton
9. Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.	( ) Keats
10. Fool, said my muse to me, look in thy heart and write.	( ) Longfellow
11. For none can call againe the passed time.	( ) Masefield
12. For they appeal from tyranny to God.	( ) Milton
13. From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.	( ) C. Rossetti
14. Silent, upon a peak in Darien.	( ) D. Rossetti
15. Than that you should remember and be sad.	( ) Shakespeare
16. They also serve who only stand and wait.	( ) Shelley
17. The lone and level sands stretch far away.	( ) Sidney
18. Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.	( ) Spenser
19. To make a poet black, and bid him sing!	( ) Wilde
20. While the eternal ages watch and wait.	( ) Wordsworth

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Philosophy from a Ringing Throat

SELECTED POEMS. By Raymond Holden. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1946. 267 *pp.* $3.

Reviewed by IRWIN EDMAN

THERE are not, I suppose, any statistics on the subject, but I suspect that the majority of books of poems published in this country are "first" books of poetry. The lyric impulse is notoriously one that fades as youth fades, and there are very few poets who do not die early as poets even if they continue to live as citizens. Raymond Holden published a volume called "Granite and Alabaster" in 1922, and in later years has published two more books of verse. He has written two novels, and a biography of Lincoln. He has also been a businessman, and at one time, a soldier. Through all this he has quietly continued to write poetry. The fruits of these years and of a genuine poetic development are now before us in his "Selected Poems." The volume is the testament and evidence of a genuine poet, as a whole section, "War Behind the Brow," never before published, offers fresh evidence.

How shall one describe the virtues and the specific tones of this genuine talent within clear but spacious limits? The virtues are those, first—and first essential of a poet—of craftsmanship with language. There is no great showiness here, no striving after calculated modernistic effect, no retreat to some revived fashionableness of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. This is poetry of a poet steeped in the long tradition of English poetry, especially in its lyric and reflectively lyrical tradition. There is a short poem entitled, "The Poet," which gives something of the quality of Mr. Holden's thoughtful sensibility:

It is a worthier thing I am
Than this I draw my breath to be,
With meaning meaningless to me,
Unless it strike the ringing throat,
And break to symbols outward bound,
Suggesting by some broken note
The logic ancestry of sound,
Larger and wider, worthier,
Than I this tongue no man was taught,
I speak, and over speech's stir
Hear the great silence taking thought.

The book is filled with acute images of landscape and of persons, but it is filled, too, with the agony and paradox of the thinking reed in all ages:

Now that I know so well
That nothing yet is known,
That dead men are but bone,
That live men are alone,
I wonder whether hell
Burns round the bony dead
Or in the quick blood's red
Congestion in the head.

There is direct feeling for line and color and the edges and vivacities of things, but Mr. Holden is, even when he is lyrical, a philosophical poet. So, for instance, he cannot look at winter maples without writing:

Though wind tear trees to bone,
And man destroy his race,
This practised life will place
Again before the face
Green evidence of grace.

But sometimes he breaks into sheer lyric cry as in "Lying Wake":

Only the heart that stops can break;
Across the crocus-lilied lawn,
The robin swims and it is dawn.

The long series of sonnets (1932-1936) is in a sound and noble tradition. The individual sonnets are not, in my judgment, outstanding, and are less individual in music and image than the less formal poems. But they have the true sonnet's mark, the cadence of feeling and a high-level altitude of intellectual insight and moral concern. Here is a poet articulately aware of the tragic predicament of a mortal creature with immortal longings, of a mind conscious of the new as well as the age-old reasons for torment, and yet aware of the deep possible serenities:

Man, measured to his toil,
Waving his oar, now low, now high,
Alive though on his way to die.

Mr. Holden risks the dangers and occasionally suffers the consequences of being a philosophical poet. He is carried so far into an absorption with the intellectual substance of his thought that his verse becomes sometimes what one can only call eloquent prose rather than the true singing lyre of poetry. The abstraction of analysis sometimes diverts him from concreteness, and the structure of ideas from image and music. But for the most part the poet keeps shining through, and at his best, it is both the philosopher and the poet in him speaking at once. One sonnet closes:

Here is my hand, veined with the
blood of trust,
To whose strength fear is but a grain
of dust.

Even in the selection of "early poems" printed here at the end of the book, the youthful lyricist is shadowed with intellectual awareness. Mr. Holden is important as one of the few poets writing today who essays the largest and widest themes of human reflection, and tries to reconcile in musical and pictorial language the "ancient enmity between poetry and philosophy." A purely technical critic might have wished he had essayed a little more variety in his forms and rhythms, a little more edged intensity in some of his sonnets. But there is unmistakable poetry here, the testament of a true singer of true things.

Raymond Holden—"a true singer of true things."

To Any Mute Inglorious Milton

By Leonora Speyer

THE well is not dry
But deep:
You, craning at the brink
To where the wall slopes sheer
Down the dim, spiral stair,
The way is not wide
But steep—
What do you fear?

Lean from your shallows, Poet:
You of the murmurous mind,
You of the laggard lip—
For you have words to keep!
Thirsty as you, they wait;
Somewhere is Song in spate.

Lean down . . .
To reach, to sip
The urgent syllable
Of surf articulate
(Better than any brink).
What if you stumble, fall?
What if you drown?
Then drown!
Song will not care, I think.
Song will not care at all.

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Poems... by Jane Reis

—SRL *photo by Arni.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *There have been few child prodigies in poetry who have been able to carry their gifts of imagination, imagery, and sensitivity to words through adolescence and into creative maturity. Little Jane Reis is indubitably a poet though she is only six years old. There is no one who has read the verses that follow who does not see in them a genuine poetic gift imbued with the characteristic charm and spontaneity of a child's mind. They were sent to us by Lionel Trilling, professor of English at Columbia University, who knows her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Reis of Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, where Professor Reis teaches philosophy.*

Most of these poems were taken down by Mrs. Reis as the child spoke them; some were written out by others. Jane's gift is known to a few people who join with her parents in seeing that she is not spoiled by more attention than any charming child receives. We feel that these poems should be published and have managed to overcome the natural hesitation of Professor and Mrs. Reis, who did not want to see their daughter exploited.

This is a valid talent. We believe that bringing into the light the work of this six-year-old girl will not check her poetic progress or her own delight in the sequence of words and thoughts that will come to her young mind.

1.

THE Lord is becoming.
Do you mean the Lord in church?
No, I mean the Lord.
If you like silly girls
You will find them hanging out of windows.

2.

What does the moon feel like
I cannot tell because I cannot reach it
It looks as if it felt thin
Like the bones in my frozen fingers.

3.

The sky is thin and gray
You can look through it
There's a monster up there
And all the people are snoring out their dreams.

4.

Sardines are in boxes on the table squeezing not swimming.
Let them look out of glass
Then they will swim and flerk their little tails.

5.

Robert Louis Stevenson is not in his garden.
He never was in his garden any more.

6.

My name is me.
Big people have names that go crazy and dizzy,
but anyway I don't know them.

7.

Someplace, always, rounds have dimples in their tops like apples.
My balloon has a gathered place.
Apples are round and red sometimes.
They start little on trees
and grow up inside their skins like people.
Ellen used to be an apple baby
She's not red yet
and on her big round tummy
She has a bellybutton.

8.

I'm pretending I'm in my song.
Grandma lives in New York.
She made me a nice, pink bow.
She really did, no kidding.
When she was a little girl she had no light,
So she put up a candle.

9.

Go in and out,
Go in and out,
Go in the woods
And meet the policeman.
Get lost today or anyday
You'll always find a policeman.

10.

Should I make up a whole round, round song?
Lights and silver,
Lights and silver
Sleep good.
Oh that's not the way!
I will shut up my words in my mouth
When they have all cringed down
I will figure it out.

11.

Why are such red and such blue windows
In chapel and churches
With people in them standing always as if you were paying attention?

12.

I'm telling about Mrs. Arunker
She is a old lady
As old as a thousand grandmothers
Her hair is sprayed out behind like a tail
And her fingers are thimbles.
Not like Mrs. Plute
Not at all like Mrs. Plute
Who is another lady that I'm pretending.

13.

Torn free, torn free,
from the old, old cradle,
It's Jesus from the village
and Christ lives all alone.
Oh! Oh! Oh!

14.

Look up at the light
and close your eyes quickly.
There's a black ring around the silver.
Then leave them closed
There is a silver ring in the dark
And it goes away far out of you
Then you are black
Out and in
Through the holes of your eyes.

15.

I had a dream
Not mean things this time.
There was music crying last night
I held a lot of things belonging to spring
But when I woke up
They would not come with me.

16.

All little pretty things I like.
Oh pretty things and ugly things make my heart feel good.
And nice things about moons and stars
and children thinking about numbers.
Little children wondering about what numbers 12 look like.
If you like 1 and 2
Then that is all
Then it is 12.

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To Those Contemplating the Eastward Journey

WALTER PEDERSEN

THERE are those who long to expend
The expendable substance elsewhere,
otherwhere,

At a place called home, far away, remote, too far for human sailing.

In the aftermath of destruction they wait,
Wishing the war would end for them
As it has for others.

They have had enough . . . period
Enough of the irrelevant lust,
Enough of the life of boys, living with boys,
With not even occasional forays into the women's quarters.

I'm beginning to see the light.
But is it more than electric light?
Saturday night is the loneliest night in the week
In an air conditioned movie.
Don't fence me in because I'm only a stallion
About to embark on a sentimental journey.

The jeep goes over the hill to the warehouse
Returning with liquor for officers.

They have had enough of officers.
But will the end come of coming and going at another's will
When they are ridden by subways and alarm clocks
Down the metallic ways of the world?

Will the fears be left on the island
Or will they generate new fears,
Fears appropriate to an atomic generation?

One fear is gone with the wind,
The fear of the unseen bullet,
In the marrow, in the kidney, in the eye, in the heart.

Another fear is coming with the wind, or is it the whirlwind?
The fear from beyond that is heard within,
The interior fear.

See these bodies in the shower,
Male bodies bearing in their loins the burden of the future,
Clean bodies, muscles strung to a brute precision,
Bearing the physical burden archly, proudly,
With vain pleasure.

Ask another question of the hearts of these men
Whose bodies are being washed clean,
Ask a question of the hearts of these men aimless except for going home,
The Eastward journey.

Will children, will boys and girls with blue eyes, dark eyes,
Will the children of these men, children of their flesh,
Children with blond hair, dark hair,
Will Michael, will Susan, will Jerry, will Hope even,
Find father anxious to grow old along with them?

Will the childhood that is wasted on islands,
wasted by biological men,
As nations rise up against nations,
Will the lost childhood of our time
Recover itself?
Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not,
for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Or does it require maturity to love children?

The will to build bravely acquires commendable speed
Only in dream
As men read lush tales of human prowess.

But the flesh lags behind the dream, as steel and concrete
Lag behind the blueprint,
And that's for sure.

Still dreading death, do they, do we, love life enough
To fear the only relevant fear, the death of the spirit?

O God of the light by which we see
Enlighten our minds
That the beauty hidden in Thy world
May shine eternally in our darkness.

O God of the life through which we live
Quicken our life
That the motion of Thy spirit
May move with the tide of our blood.

O God of the love through which we grow
Ennoble our desires
That our hearts
May learn peace.

Walter Pedersen did not make the Eastward journey of which he wrote so eloquently on Okinawa in 1945. *He left the Unitarian parsonage at Cohasset, Mass., to serve as Red Cross field director during the war, and now is engaged in U. S. educational work in Japan, where his family have joined him.* SRL *is indebted to John Eastman, Jr., Framingham Centre, Mass., for submitting the poem.*

Bomber Song

By Robert Resor

GLORIOUS they said this would be:
The long sweep over England,
The long haul in the dancing sun
Over the cold North Sea,

The long train swinging between
The alien earth and sun,
The minutes longer than years are long
As we open the death machine,

The long seeds packed with flowers,
Acidly arching down:
Indifferent I watch our careless crop
And count the homeward hours.

Bubbling they said with wine
My hollow head would be:
All I felt was the long veins' blood
Run chill as turpentine.

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Reliving Flights

(From Hospital)

By Norman Ralph Ross

I.

RECALL love,
Recall hate,
Recall palm trees, pine trees, oaks.
Recall fate.

Recall dreams,
Recall fears,
Recall oceans, rivers, lakes.
Recall tears.

Dry them, the all consuming oceans,
The rivers,
The lakes.
Dry the seas of tears.
Suck them up thru parched lips—
Quench the overwhelming thirst—or die!

II

Recall desire,
Recall lust,
Recall friends, enemies, fleeting acquaintances.
Recall dust.

Recall dark,
Recall light,
Recall purple hills, mountains, jagged rocks.
Recall night.

Thunderous rain!
Silent snow!
Deep, misty fog!
Gray, shadowy dusk!

(Recall these)

III

Over bottomless chasms,
Still, soundless villages,
Sleepless cities and sandless deserts,
Over the steaming jungle's sun-sprayed beaches.

Over hills, perilous mountains,
Parched fields, fruitless harvests.
Over rotted, rusted ships beneath the channels
And white-stoned graves and crosses row on row.

Recall the birth of life!
Recall the advent of Death!
Recall a Mother's womb.
Recall the final breath.

Battle fatigue from sixty Naval Air Corps combat missions hospitalized twenty-three-year-old Norman Ralph Ross for six months. He's now studying at Columbia University and is a member of the Veteran Writers' Workshop at the N. Y. C. Veterans' Center.

Displaced Persons

By Don Gordon

BARBED wire is the only direct line between the war and the peace;
The mice hear them tapping on it the dry monotone of the cage.
The brain in a double grave, the bone and the iron, tricks out the insane word: *tomorrow.*

People in countries say a man should be sufficient in his skin;
In the demi-world of wire a house in a known land is their father's mansion.
Thoughtful artists paint them, the icy plain blue underfoot, the sky frozen.
Winter and summer in this garden the metal thorns grow against their foreheads.

The nations keep lions to prove their valor.
They guard in the camps the symbols of their own weakness and the great fear.
They assemble thousands to enact in a black catharsis all who are lost:
those who search everywhere for their mothers; those who want love and find it in mirrors; the empty ones who need to be conquerors; the statesmen, the eternal gendarme, the mercenaries, the lovers of pain.

The structure is long in dying; story by story like a building
Under artillery fire it comes down from the tower. The inhabitants
Use symbols as their last food: after the lions, men must be eaten.

Love Song in an Occupied Country

By Katherine Garrison Chapin

MORE alone than survivors on a storm-wracked island,
Everywhere surrounded by alien sounds and faces,
Alien earth and bread,

Heart looks into heart to find its recognition,
Weighted with meaning are the touch, the glances,
Weighted the words said.

Love is exclusive; it thrusts out darkness
Weather and wind, the cry of passing birds
Under the eaves.

It thrusts out the broken city, the shapes at the
Gabled windows, what lies in the unmarked mound
Under the leaves.

Even the emptiness haunting other eyes,
Dulled in the mesh of the endless circle
Of duty,

Sharpens love, tenderness is more poignant,
Memories shared draw closer, here in this strange
Spring's beauty.

Turn to me, where the pallet is thin and the
Feather quilt smells of foreign herbs, the linen
Is rough and cold;
No longer alien or lost; your breast is all
That I ask of home, and your need of it
My arms hold.

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EVALUATING POETRY

AMERICANS seem to like statistics (whatever they prove!) and among our modern institutions the Gallup Poll is accorded grave attention. I do not think that a Gallup Poll has ever been taken on poetry!

Such an inquiry might be divided under several heads, first as to whether the *inquiree* is allergic to anything in the form of verse, then as to whether a poem is, in his or her estimation, nothing more than a simply rhythmic statement completely understandable at first glance and as straightforward as prose, *maugre* rhyme and metre, or whether it is, or might be, a great deal besides. Does the *inquiree* consider poetry to be a mental extravagance, a literary luxury, a "sissy" and unrealistic way of regarding things, an obfuscating form of mental activity; or, on the other hand, a powerful moral or intellectual stimulus, a necessary and valid esthetic asset, an emotional satisfaction blending the appeals of music and painting with something else added, the vehicle of profound wisdom and such overtones of ratiocination as are impossible to prose, or whatever? Perhaps an organization like the Poetry Society of America might take a cross-section of ordinarily intelligent people in the United States and try such a questionnaire, with interesting results.

But only in some such comprehensive way might one determine more exactly how the United States of America regards poetry. In my opinion I think that poetry arouses as much interest in our country today as one might normally expect. There seem to me to be less paying media that print poetry to any extent, and the chief liberal weeklies of opinion rarely use a poem. But there are plenty of private presses and small poetry magazines as outlets for the young practitioner. Clever light verse can always find a market. The more experimental poetry has hard sledding because it is a special kind of language with which the average reader has small patience.

Any keen mind thinks it is fitted to judge poetry. Once, in years gone by, I even met with an editor of unusual mental endowments who had no use for poetry whatever. He admitted frankly that he saw no reason for its existence! But many today read poetry as they run, and pronounce snap judgments upon it with a glibness they do not bring to the consideration of other forms of literature. It is not the poets who continually question the taste of such ready arbiters. There are other people who know that poetry is just something you "dash off," and even the gentlest criticism cannot pierce their self-assurance.

In spite of these anciently-established facts, poetry of recent years in America seems to me to have shown distinct signs of life, though it often appears to be as hard to agree upon what poetry is as to establish the international control of atomic energy. Certainly it is hard to control the atomic energy of poetry! It is always breaking out in a new place. Under a police state it simply goes underground. But it is there, and it is the poetry in man which may eventually blow all police states to smithereens! Yet to think poetry anarchic would be a great mistake. Great poetry is one of the most truly constructive natural forces in the world.

That is why this periodical accords to poetry chief place in a yearly number. If you read the leading article carefully you will realize, if you do not already know it, that poetry has indeed a special language of its own, a language worth learning, a power of suggestion, a conjuration, an allusiveness that enriches the mind and the emotions. Once one has truly imbibed of poetry, what has materialism to offer that does not seem heavy-footed and stupid by comparison?

W. R. B.

Chance Double Exposure

By Frederick Mortimer Clapp

SOME black figures under a freak thunderstorm
lean over an oblong box they let, with routine circumspection, down
into an oblong hole.
Tears rivulet bitter in puckered creases. Some day their dole
of salt will reach the sea. Maybe when the moon's nearer
and its puffed-up face fills half the sky
and its crater-rings, like the splashes tears or raindrops make in mud,
belie our telescopic magnitudes in the eye's lop-sided
magnifications.

But the man isn't dead. He's just lost between time and space
where in our seeing their suture is disguised
by the scar tissue of places and moments that could not be.
They opened him up like a bivalve under a knifing glare;
they found worming tentacles entangled in his liver.
Without even a hurried word they sewed him up again
and shot him something
that he the easier might seem to die,
and the taker shook hands across him with the giver.

Some scientific faces studied closely for a moment a flutter in his eyelids
then with a wet thud dropped wads of dressings in a pail,
and turned expressionless away,
hands feeling up behind them to unbutton scarlet smocks.
Lights went out. Electric clocks stopped. The machine stitching of change
clicked on. Nobody could say who dyed the moment's
thread so red
when in a way some one had only left for his vacation.

Some draped figures kept on talking walking down long bare hallways
which converged to a point like the tracks of an iron disease.
until they were blocked by an oblong box no one could move.
Another brief thunderstorm blackening crackled overhead
and rumbled into a resignation. The moon fell down but not more
than a quarter of an inch. It raised by a hair's breadth the tide's
sloshing on the locked teeth of reefs.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Esoteric and Sentimental Nonsense

SIR: Mr. Edwin Seaver's article [*SRL* Feb. 15] "The Age of the Jackpot" is a mess of esoteric and sentimental nonsense. He deplores the fact that modern writers are concerned with financial success, and implies that they ought to return to their barren garrets and turn out "art" for the smug and the maudlin, with nary a thought for the book clubs or the best-seller lists.

It was the great writer, Samuel Butler, who said: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." I assure you that my most "lyrical prose" resulted from the anticipation of big checks from my publishers and the book clubs. My best writing has been done (and the critics commended the results) when I had a new car, a new home, a trip, or a mink coat in mind. Thomas B. Macaulay wrote: "Every day shows me more and more strongly how necessary a competence is to a man who desires to be either great or useful." Mr. Seaver would deny the writer this competence, and would have him gnaw crusts again and look at the empty stars. The profit motive cannot be removed from an artist, no more than it can be removed from the industrialist. Neither will work without hope of more than ordinary reward, as Russia found out to her naive amazement. None of us have as yet reached that ethereal state where he is willing to struggle and dream merely for the "sake of humanity."

Writers, too, have a digestive system, and they want a home and pleasant surroundings, and it does not inspire their hearts to see their children in patched clothing, and to watch their fat inferiors snubbing them. Mr. Seaver, instead of writing transcendental imbecilities, would do better by asking state support of writers, so that they can do their individual best without listening for the landlord's knock on the door.

Besides, who can judge what is "good" or "bad" in literature? Public acceptance is the only yardstick by which a writer can know if he is turning out trash or gold. With few exceptions, popular books are the best books. I prefer the judgment of my public, and the dollars of their approval, rather than some lofty critic's accolade, and poverty. Mr. Seaver insults the reading public when he implies that it rewards only bad writers.

TAYLOR CALDWELL.

Eggertsville, N. Y.

Mr. Fields in Dutch

SIR: Since your reviewer Mr. Arthur C. Fields has taken it upon himself to deliver a scathing attack on my translation of "The Platter" by A. M. de Jong [*SRL* Feb. 22] I cannot help but avail myself of an opportunity to answer aforesaid gentleman in defense of my labors.

1) I am extremely anxious to know whether Mr. Fields knows Dutch and has read the book in the original language.

2) Mr. Fields accuses me of using "vile, earthy language that is as much out of place as would be Studs Lonigan's vulgarisms in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." The comparison is simply absurd. Apparently Mr. Fields misses the point of the tale completely and for the following reasons:

a) The language of the original is earthy.
b) The conversation more often than not is vulgar.
c) The expression used in the abuse of the more unsavory characters are vile.

Even in puritan Holland the language used by farm and small-town people is "earthy" and what is wrong about that? Name-calling of which there is a great deal in this book does not exactly manifest itself through a nice choice of refined epithets. As a matter of fact I have tried to tone down some of the four-letter words that abound in the original text.

3) Says Mr. Fields: "There is a noted discrepancy between the smoothness of the earlier and later pages of the book." Does Mr. Fields perchance mean to imply that the book was not translated by *one and the same person?* Well, well, Mr. Fields, you'll have to take my word for it. But I did *all* of the translation myself, and aren't you really rather contradictory in calling even part of the translation "smooth"? Concerning the tapering off towards the end of the translation, let me say, just to please you, that maybe the translator got bored with the translation. Will that explanation suffice, as well as that this extraordinary comment on the part of the pundit is contradictory, haywire, *non compos mentis*, wrongheaded, abusive, and silly?

I am no Lewis Galantière, nor yet a Haakon Chevalier, neither am I a Scott Moncrieff nor a Teixara de Mattos, to mention but a few of the most eminent modern translators. I simply thought my job was adequately done, and this was borne out by comments in other papers.

I do plead guilty, however, to translating some of the original which was either in dialect or slang into what appeared to me was the equivalent in American slang and colloquialism. *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*

A. v. A. VAN DUYM.

New York, N. Y.

THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"Oh, it's clever, Mr. Edison. But what do you do for a living?"

Anyway, It's Parthenogenesis

SIR: This is not to split a hair but rather to set straight an apparent misconception. Both John Steinbeck in his novel "The Wayward Bus" and Harrison Smith in his sympathetic review of that novel err in using the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as the basis for a witty comment on the character Mrs. Pritchard, who in spite of her sexual austerity has produced a daughter, Mildred. The improbability of Mrs. Pritchard producing anything by other than spontaneous generation cannot be explained away by cutely oblique references to Immaculate Conception.

Steinbeck and Smith share a common error. The Immaculate Conception has nothing to do with the doctrine of virgin birth. It is, however, indicative of a by-now tiresome label for reproductive improbability. I'd suggest that it be let alone for a generation or two.

JAMES Y. MAHER.

New York, N. Y.

Hymn of Hate

SIR: I swear I will go on a bender
Next time I read a book is *slender*!

ELLEN NIELSEN.

Fresno, Calif.

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Vladivostok to Moscow Express

THROUGH RUSSIA'S BACK DOOR. By Richard E. Lauterbach. New York: Harper & Bros. 1947. 239 *pp.* $2.75.

Reviewed by EDGAR SNOW

THERE is much more to this new book by Richard Lauterbach than at first meets the eye, and more can be learned from it than from reading half a dozen less discursive reports about the Soviet Union and the Russian people. That is a tribute to the author's own personality and his skill and resourcefulness as a reporter, for he has made much from little by the use of his sharp eye and faithful, attentive ear. In this book we also have a fine illustration of the value of a little study of the country one seeks to report. Though the author does not intrude it upon the reader, his basic knowledge of Russia is ever-present in the background of his writing, and influences his selection and coloration of observation and experience, to give it perception and significance. There is after all no substitute, when you are writing about a foreign country, for knowledge of its language, and familiarity with its history.

As in his previous volume, "These Are the Russians," the new book reveals the author as a gifted and unprejudiced young observer, who travels in a humble spirit of inquiry and with warm human sympathy, and the honest good will of genuine interest in people, and in ways of life strange to him. Those are of course merely the qualities of a civilized writer, but it is surprising how seldom we find foreign correspondents who possess them.

The greater part of "Through Russia's Back Door" is a convincing description of a twelve-day journey from Vladivostok to Moscow, via the Trans-Siberian "express." Written mainly in conversational form, and given a certain literary charm by Lauterbach's own very active wit and sense of fun, it is good entertainment as well as informative. The author was probably the first American correspondent *(Time-Life)* to go from Shanghai to Europe by this route since Pearl Harbor, and it is interesting to realize that five thousand miles of railway track in the middle of a nation so prominent as Soviet Russia can be hidden from the world for so many years. But impressions of any train journey are bound to be strictly limited in dimensions, and even this long, unusual trip is no exception. Only Lauterbach's ability to speak directly to his companions, his tireless curiosity about them, and his talent for choosing the right dialogue to illustrate the photographs he enterprisingly snapped along the way, make this a lively chronicle inhabited by Russians who emerge as personalities through whom we glimpse something of the giant shadow of the land, looming beyond.

Here for once is a correspondent's book in which the author is occupied mainly with Russians rather than with the antics of fellow correspondents and foreign attachés; in which we are not led up and down the gloomy halls of the Metropol Hotel once more; in which practically nothing is said about official banquets and pointless vodka-drinking; and in which we do not have to get acquainted with another candidate for the role of successor to Tov. Stalin.

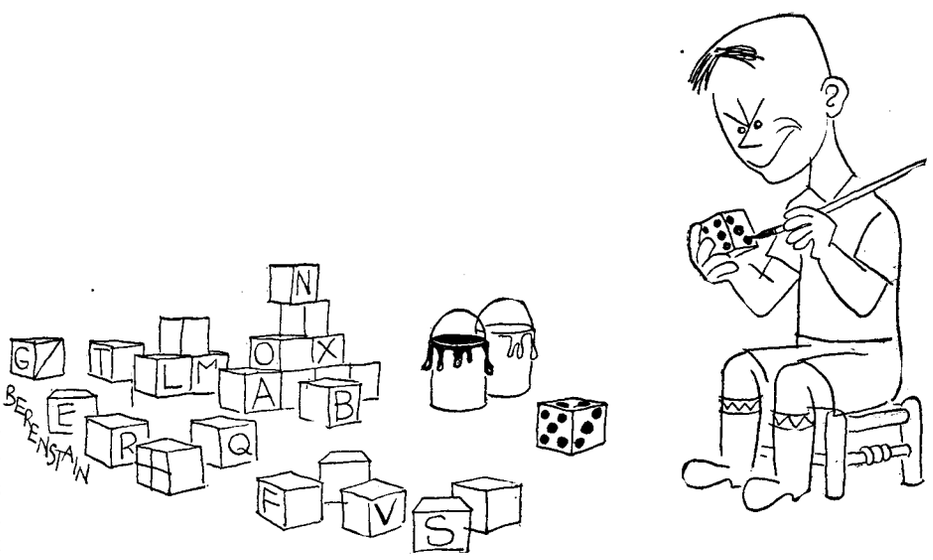
Lauterbach spent several days in Vladivostok and found it "the most unkempt, disorganized Soviet city [he had] ever visited. Everything was in a state of disrepair, including the planked boardwalks on the side streets," and the "muddy cowpaths" off Lenin Street, the main thoroughfare. But he noticed new wire and new poles around the large concentration camp for political prisoners outside the city. Inside he saw many beggars—rather a rarity in most Soviet cities—and later asked his roommate on the Trans-Siberian, a Mr. Ageev, about them. They were "former political prisoners." Why?

"Perhaps they will not take jobs?" suggested Ageev. "Perhaps some people will not give them work. I do not know."

You get to like Ageev, as the journey lengthens; he warms up. Bored, he talks more freely. Packed together for so many days, each passenger comes to know all about every other passenger in Lauterbach's *Wagon-Lits* car. Soon they put up a common front against the "outer world" encountered at the far-between stations. They come to the American's defense when he wants to take pictures along the way. They even pose for his pictures themselves.

Sometimes out of interest, sometimes from boredom, Russians ask Lauterbach questions about America, attack our policies in China and Korea, show their fear of the atom bomb and their hatred of the "reactionaries" who "surround them" with new threats of war, or compare demobilization benefits offered to the Russian GI with those in America. Lauterbach listens patiently, points out mistakes where he can, slyly offers copies of *Amerika*, our government-published Russian-language journal, as counter-propaganda.

Along the way we get the train's impression of almost mythical towns such as Ulan Ude, Chita, Irkutsk, and Kharbarovsk. We learn that the Jewish autonomous region, Birobijan, still exists. We hear the old conductor reminisce about famous passengers he has carried—down to and including Marshal Bluecher, whom he is convinced was executed with Tukhachevsky. At one station a little boy comes to beg at the diner and a Russian general, who never takes off his Japanese blue silk pajamas from Vladivostok to Moscow, gives him half a loaf of bread after he sings "We Drink for Stalin." At Mozza an old peasant woman, her skirts stuffed with rubles, offers to buy the shoes off Lauterbach's feet. And Ageev, who is an official in the foreign trade commissariat, declines to show his wife and child, on the same train, his copy of *Amerika*. "No, I will tell you," explains Ageev. "They are happy to be going to Moscow. There are many things they will not have. Not yet for



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a while." He smiles "You understand?" Why bewilder and perplex them with pictures of conveniences and undreamt-of luxuries in America?

Arrived in Moscow, Lauterbach devotes the remainder of his book to an inventory of post-war changes he finds there, and to graphic descriptions of the damage done to Russia, which explains some of the phenomena reported during the trip through Siberia. His chapter on "The Dwindling Peace" deals with plain truths continuously ignored by such gentlemen as Patterson, Hearst, McCormick, and Howard.

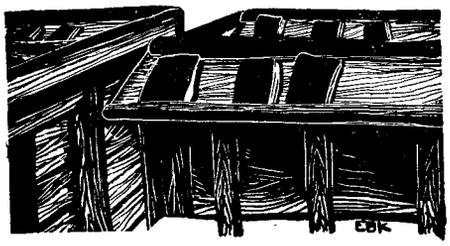
Russia lost about a third of all her industry during the war, and six million homes, or the equivalent of the housing in our fifteen largest cities. If all her plans were fulfilled for the next thirteen years she would still be making only two-thirds as much steel as the United States turned out in 1945. The plain facts show that Russia is in no condition to support a war today. There are no convincing indications that her principal efforts favor war ends above peace aims. The Kremlin understands that the Russian people (mourning twelve to fifteen million dead) could not be driven to fight an aggressive war against even a second-rate power; they must have peace. Indeed, peace is now the inescapable condition for continuation of Soviet power inside the Kremlin itself, as well as without.

But such observations "will probably satisfy few people," the author points out. "For in America today almost nobody is interested in a balanced judgment of the Soviet Union." To be a patriot now it is necessary to find the Soviet government wrong all the time, and to defend our War-Navy-State policies as always right. And to avoid being called a "fascist beast" by the few people who do not denounce everything Soviet you are too often expected to profess an antithesis fully as insupportable: that Russia is a Utopia, and that Soviet policies are always and everywhere the only good, true, just, wise, democratic, realistic, idealistic policies.

Lauterbach deserves our praise and attention for the fine objectivity with which he skirts both extremes. He brings us useful information and interpretations about Russia, her people, and their problems, and shows how they all affect us and our common longing to co-exist in peace.

Edgar Snow's book "Red Star Over China" first revealed the strength of communist influence in North China. During the war, as a Saturday Evening Post *editor and foreign correspondent, he investigated India, Russia, and Europe. He recently returned to Europe.*

Chronicle of a Man and a Poet



KILVERT'S DIARY: 1870-1879. Edited by William Plomer. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1947. 400 *pp.* + *Index.* $3.

Reviewed by R. ELLIS ROBERTS

WHEN he had been keeping this diary, a record full of detail, for nearly five years, Francis Kilvert, then curate to his father, the Rector of Langley Burrell in Wiltshire, wrote in November 1872:

> Why do I keep this voluminous journal? I can hardly tell. Partly because life appears to me such a curious and wonderful thing that it almost seems a pity that even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should pass altogether away without some such record as this, and partly too, because I think the record may amuse and interest some who come after me.

I doubt if we can safely deduce from this modest appraisal that Kilvert had any idea how great a talent his was, how keen an eye, how sensitive and lively an interest in the people he met and the chances he encountered. That his diary, as a human document—if one can use that old-fashioned but so appropriate a label—is one of the most entertaining in English there is no question. It would be absurd to compare it with Pepys's shameless self-recordings or close-up views of public people and events; as literature the book need not fear the comparison, and as a record of a man and a poet the diary is far better than Parson Woodeforde's or that of William Cole, Walpole's acquaintance. I know no comparable book, except perhaps some pages in Askakov's recollections, and the great Russian had the advantage of remembering the past, not of catching the moment.

To the student of Victorian times the book is invaluable—or rather will be, when someone has the complete work published. The present book is but selections from the three volumes, themselves only selections, published in England in 1938, 1939, and 1940. Grateful as we must be to Mr. William Plomer for discovering the diary, and securing permission to publish as much as he has, it is foolish to pretend that either his original three volumes or the present abbreviation of them can satisfy. The "editing" is negligible. Younger readers in England and here will often be at a complete loss, and Mr. Plomer's occasional notes, for instance on Father Ignatius, on William Barnes, on William Alexander are merely tantalizing hints. Still, here is a rich and rewarding book, a book that will either confuse or correct many opinions on the great Victorian age.

Kilvert, first, had an intense faculty for the appreciation of natural beauty; and he could write of it with a passion which he may have caught from John Ruskin who was a great influence at Oxford when Kilvert was an undergraduate at Wadham. His interest in people, especially his parishioners, is equally keen. He must have been a very tender pastor. He has no harsh words except for arrogance and greed. He was devoted to children, especially little girls, and the reader will constantly be reminded of Lewis Carroll. Much of his brief clerical life—he was ordained in 1870 and died in 1879—was spent in Wales, and he loved the spontaneity and quick emotional affection of the people of Radnorshire. He loved and was loved by a squire's daughter whose father refused him leave to court her (she died a spinster); but this high affection for a Welsh Beatrice did not prevent Kilvert from falling headlong in love with maiden after friendly maiden. In some ways a conventional man, especially in his esthetics and politics, he was temperamentally a rebel. His sketches of his parishioners have humor and true sympathy, and few persons could have been so free from clerical superiority. But the man must be discovered for himself.

Outing in Ectoplasm

By Genevieve Ellis

THE moon has veiled its light,
And I feel coolly brave.
I shouldn't wonder if my grave
Gives up its dead, tonight.

A mist will mount the hill
Where now my heart lies under.
A laugh will cleave the cold asunder
By a gust more chill.

A-swirl in chiffon gown,
Afloat in cape of vapor,
Now I'll slink and now I'll caper
Slyly into town.

Where I shall writhe and weep
As weirdly as I can.
Tonight I haunt the haunting man
Who dares disturb my sleep!

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Mortarboard Jeremiah

MR. WHITTLE AND THE MORNING STAR. By Robert Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1947. 175 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by
CATHERINE MEREDITH BROWN

BEYOND Armageddon, beyond any possible trouble in Paradise, lies the supreme struggle between God and man. Adam created the conflict; perhaps the splitting of the atom has ended it. What greater knowledge can be given mankind than the secret of complete annihilation? The question now seems to be: will oblivion be achieved by the power of God or man?

Mr. Nathan answers the imponderables in a fine spirit of hope and affirmation. He has taken his text from Revelation. "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come . . . and I will give him the morning star." Time is too quickly sped, our fleeting moments hold too little, the stars fall, and we miss the wish. Mr. Nathan bids us pause, look, see, rejoice, and believe God will grant us more time.

In "Mr. Whittle and the Morning Star" the colossal is reduced to a typical segment of wonderfully realistic characters. In the town of Riverton on a May morning the conviction of the coming end of the world is realized by Mr. Whittle, poor history professor at the local college. He alone hears the faint, final crack. A modern Jeremiah, he cannot break through the day's problems. His wife, warned by him, counters with her concern over the evening meal. His gloriously normal daughter deserts Dick Tracy only long enough to ask why we are doomed. "Because we have learned the wrong things," says Mr. Whittle. "We have learned to explode the atom . . . but we have not learned to get along with each other. So we shall all explode together."

No one hears. Mr. Blaney, the rich banker, attributes the world's end to Congress. The local ladies, uncomprehending and shocked, leave Mr. Whittle's lecture more than ever in favor of the Church. His students think he is only trying to confuse them. The ultimate aloneness is his.

Mr. Whittle, on a despair-induced midsummer's eve, strays, slightly and innocently, with a pretty student. Returning home, he spies his wife under the street lamp in Mr. Blaney's arms. This is much more final than destruction. Wandering through the now stormy night, he recognizes God, contracts pneumonia, and is brought home to Amanda and she to him without fear.

The talk with God is delicious. Even the Almighty is concerned with a way out, but His credo on man is quite superb. "He is my protagonist on earth, a mortal witness to my existence; without him I should see only what a spider sees . . . It will be a long while before a spider writes a symphony, or a mouse builds a cathedral."

Even the Almighty, to Robert Nathan, "is concerned with a way out."

Whether or not Mr. Nathan's case is conclusive matters little. What does matter is the poetry of his prose, the delectable merger of the mystic with the mundane, the interjection of astringent humor, and the over-all jubilance in the union of God and man.

It is as if mankind had gotten too big for his breeches. There must be some simple or scientific remedy.

Just Neighborly—African Style

THE UMBRELLA THORN. By Peter de Polnay. New York: Creative Age Press. 1947. 309 *pp.* $2.75.

Reviewed by LINTON WELLS

MANY may feel that Peter de Polnay has collected a queer lot of hard-drinking characters under "The Umbrella Thorn," but to those of us who know Kenya he has told beautifully a story set against the colorful background of British-African farm life, and has vividly depicted the settlers' never-ending struggle against drought, predatory animals, and insects, and their own ineptitudes and emotions. One would believe Mr. De Polnay had lived there a lifetime, so skilfully and convincingly has he humanized his characters and their environment; the result is a literary treat for novel lovers and an excellent motion picture opportunity for some cinema company.

Handsome, irresponsible Miles Wace left his impractical wife Gloria a debt-burdened widow and mother on the day their first son was born in a Nairobi hospital. His wealthy friend and neighbor, self-disciplined and outwardly unemotional Major David McKenna, heir to a baronetcy, undertook to look after Gloria and his new godson, Davy, conforming to the age-old African adage that one must carry one's neighbor's burdens on one's back. David didn't want to marry Gloria or any other woman: he had permitted a faithless wife to divorce him, then abandoned his beloved army career because he considered it the conventional thing to do, and buried himself on a remote Kenya stock farm. But the urgings of his bibulous friends, combined with the threat of gossip, a growing liking for his neglected godson, and a skinful of liquor, moved David to propose marriage.

Gloria was not in love with David but finally succumbed to the advice of her hard-boiled friend, Betty Newton, and for the sake of security agreed to a marriage of convenience. After ups and downs, and temptations resisted, she finally decided that life with David and Davy, her son, under "The Umbrella Thorn," as Lady McKenna, was worth cherishing.

Under that thorn tree, long before, David had found that "he had nothing to fear—no remorse, no jealousy, and no time." One gets that way in the hinterland of regions such as Kenya.

Peter de Polnay offers "a literary treat and an excellent motion picture opportunity."

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The Unholy Trinity

ALL SOULS' NIGHT. By John Kelly. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1947. 283 pp. $3.

Reviewed by HARRISON SMITH

THERE can be little doubt that John Kelly's first book will achieve for him, in the words of his publishers, "a leading place among young American novelists." But it will be a lonely place on top of a glittering and solitary peak, for surely there can be few of our new writers who can view so wide an expanse of literature, summon instantly the right quotation from ancient Greece or modern Europe, or who can command their characters to produce streams of verbal fireworks instead of the stumbling speech of ordinary men. Yale, Cambridge, and Harvard, extensive travel in Europe, and a personal involvement with the implacable moral and spiritual fatalities must have given Mr. Kelly the complex background that made his novel possible. It was fitting that he should have published before his novel an admirable essay, "Franz Kafka and the Theology of Crisis," for his work stems partly from Kafka or from those who have been influenced by the tortured Austrian novelist, and, weirdly enough, from Oscar Wilde. For the plot and the two young men who dominate it are typically Wildean, and they converse as would Dorian Gray and his companions if they had had the advantage of two world wars, a wider acquaintance with litterature, and a knowledge of the works of Sigmund Freud.

There is a kind of Edwardian polish and elegance about this book, though its setting is in a New England college just before the Second World War. Pearse and MacGregor had met and formed an indissoluble friendship at Port Royal (Yale?); they had traveled abroad with a beautiful, well-born English girl as if they were both her brothers and her lovers. Ida served as the lightning rod between this pair of mental dynamos, who were lucky to have attached to them one of the few women in the world capable of capping their quotations and of understanding what they were talking about.

When the novel opens, Pearse has returned to Port Royal's magnificent Maecenas Club after divorcing a distraught wife, to find that Ida is living with Greg's wealthy parents and that Greg is trying to complete his manifest destiny as the son of a capitalist by going to work. The three components of this trinity fly together again like the parts of an atomic bomb, and it is obvious that an explosion must follow. Ida has crossed the Atlantic in the hope that she may marry Greg, but the mystic ecstasy they find in each other prevents so simple a solution. Greg's mother understandably tries to destroy this inexplicable relationship. As the drama progresses, it appears to the uninitiate that Pearse has a sinister hold over his friend, that he is destroying him mentally by forcing him to follow him into paths that are beyond his reach. The crisis comes when Greg's mind breaks down. He flees toward his family home in the South after a disillusioning sexual experience with Ida. Pearse follows, and the truth of the union between the two men is gradually revealed. Of the two Greg is the genius, Pearse the slave, in spite of his superior volubility and his dynamic grasp of the dilemma into which the world of thought and beauty is collapsing. Though the author does not say so directly, the reader suspects that there is a homosexual direction in Greg's attraction for his friend.

John Kelly's first book reveals he "is a social satirist of no mean order."

Since it can never be satisfied or the chain between them broken, they are both doomed, and in a lesser measure so is Ida, who was the second key symbol in Greg's life. Greg must beckon to death, as he and his friend know, and later in Port Royal he lies down to die, apparently an act of his will. When Ida discovers that she will bear Greg's child, she knows that fate has relented and that she will be able to marry Pearse, and to return to England with him to carry out their triangular destiny.

In this brief summary of the progress of events in "All Souls' Night," there is no hint of the peculiar magic of the book on the reader's mind, of the pleasure of reading Mr. Kelly's fine and richly embroidered prose; for the author's style is brilliant, his command of words and images superb. In addition to his other gifts John Kelly is a social satirist of no mean order. If in his next novel he should find a less involved theme than the mental and amorous dominance of two men over each other and over a woman and should care to express it through less complicated natures and simpler relationships to the ultimate mysteries of life, John Kelly may well prove himself to be one of the outstanding creative talents of the coming days. But even if the reader finds it difficult to discover what it is all about, whether it is a decoratively elaborated mystery or a symbolic representation of the relationship of men and women to destiny, he will find it a relief from the sharp realism and the somewhat primitive folk dramas that engage the minds of most of our novelists today.

Song

By Theodore Spencer

LOOKING for strange words
Polyhedral words
Carved to make new planes
And new exciting angles,
I find something so simple
It seems like nothing at all,
And yet is everything,
And it sings, as I sing,
Out of complication
The simple relation
Of love.

The daily grey herds
The subway herds
With comic-strips in their brains
And movie stars for spangles
All come to a thing so simple
It seems like nothing at all
Though it is everything,
And they sing, as I sing,
Out of complication
The simple relation
Of love.

Backwards, then forwards
We move, onwards
With fewer hands than reins,
But underneath the tangles
There is a thing so simple
It seems like nothing at all
Though it is everything,
And it sings, as I sing,
Out of complication
The simple relation
Of love.

Erratum

Herma, not Herman, Briffault edited "The Memoirs of Dr. Felix Kersten," as stated in *SRL* March 8.

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Seeing Things

THE BOOK OF RUTH

AS A question this wears a long gray beard. A first-night has an excitement of its own. It is the hour of decision; the ordeal by fire; the unavoidable moment when the gauntlet must be run. But is it—indeed, can it be, electric with crisis as it is—the fairest time at which to judge a performance?

Even if a play has been tried out of town and its actors, having grown used to their parts and accustomed to audience reactions, are spared the horror of "opening cold," still that night of nights on Broadway is bound to be different. Terrifyingly so.

First-nighters are more than theatregoers. They are jurors, too; Romans at the arena's edge, with the power of life and death in their thumbs. There is no predicting their response or foretelling what will bore or please them. Their awareness of what is at stake is one of the sources of their pleasure. They can be cold or warm, remote or friendly. Their surrender, when they do surrender, is as heady an intoxicant as their world knows. But their apathy, even their hostility (however justified) can freeze the blood.

They are part of the verdict, and sense both their power and importance. Something of the actor's uneasiness and the actor's hope disturbs their hearts. It is this tension of the undecided which makes of first-nights the cruel sport that at their worst they are. It also turns them, on more fortunate occasions, into the unforgettable adventures that they can be.

How actors meet the crisis depends upon their temperaments. A few, unquestionably, are stimulated into giving their best performances. Instead of being done in by the ordeal, they outdo themselves. There are others, however, who become all nerves. They wander in and out in a daze. They can scarcely hear what they are saying, much less what their fellow players say. Although as good professionals they mask their fright, frightened they are—and with reason. If they are not frightened, at least they are so on edge that what they do, whether constricted or inspired, is unrepresentative.

I raise this venerable question of when it is fairest to sit before a play because recently, many weeks after its successful opening, I happened to see "Years Ago"* at a Saturday matinee. The whole feeling on both sides of the footlights was happily different from what it would have been at the premiere. Although the audience was full of chocolate-crunchers, it was free of first-nighters. The stage was the proper center of attention. Everyone—acting and watching—was relaxed. A family group had foregathered to enjoy, not judge, Ruth Gordon's comedy about herself and her own family. What is more, it was enjoying itself hugely.

Of course, I have no way of knowing or proving this. Yet my confident suspicion is that what all of us were seeing was a performance infinitely better, richer, and more polished than could have been given at the opening of "Years Ago," however well the comedy may then have been played.

Good actors do not leave good parts alone and are not left alone by them. A good part demands the kind of exploration and development which only time and many audiences can bring. Good actors are not satisfied with leaving well-enough alone. They are discoverers whose discoveries never end.

What they discover may be as important as how to act with their fellow actors so that a company has been fused into an ensemble. It may be some sudden insight into a character that has formerly eluded them. It may be no more than a telling intonation here (stumbled on by chance) or a gesture employed there where no gesture was used before. But, as the weeks go by, actors must grow—unless they would grow stale. In acting as in living there is no standing still. To stand still is not to be stationary. It is to be going backwards without realizing it.

The performance of "Years Ago" which I saw was full of signs of growth. You felt immediately that it had advanced, as performances will advance when once the nightmare of an opening is safely past. Its details had been perfected. It was innocent of uncertainties. It was in the full tide of its excellences. Confident though it was, it was not sloppy.

* *YEARS AGO, a comedy by Ruth Gordon. Directed by Garson Kanin. Setting by Donald Oenslager. Presented by Max Gordon, with a cast including Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, Patricia Kirkland, Bethel Leslie, Jennifer Bunker, Fred Whitmarsh, Seth Arnold, Frederic Persson, and Judith Cargil. At the Mansfield.*

—*Hugelmeyer.*

Ruth Gordon's autobiographical "Years Ago" is "leisurely . . . slight . . . honest . . . gay . . . dissolving . . . sentimental."

Neither was it perfunctory. That dreaded moment of the let-down, which can and usually does overtake a production during the doldrums of a prosperous run, showed no signs of being even remotely near. The acting was fresh, warm, self-assured, integrated, and expert.

A few of Mr. March's pauses may have been a trifle long. He may have been stretching them a little as the best of good actors can be tempted into stretching pauses when they are completely at home in a character part. Wasn't it some forty minutes by the clock that George M. Cohan added by just such indulgences to the playing time of "Ah, Wilderness!" before he closed in it? But, even so, Mr. March's characterization of Miss Gordon's father was a delight.

HE had explored the part fully, mastered its shadings, and was acting it from within. The slight stoop of the shoulders; the hint of an accent; the suggestion of a sailor's walk, remembered from youth and persisting years afterwards on dry land; the manual dexterity shown in tying knots and handling a knife when doing up a package; the indications of an old codger's temper ever-ready to erupt; and the pathos of a "little man," gallant at heart but hard-driven economically — all of these were admirably established by Mr. March.

I do not mean to suggest surprise at Mr. March's excellence. Anyone who has watched his long and varied career on the stage and screen knows Mr. March has grown, and kept on growing. He has refused to trade on his good looks. By his intelligence, his industry, and his palpable fondness for his craft, he has become one of our most dependable players. Few

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THEATRE GUILD PRODUCTIONS

The Musical Hit
CAROUSEL
Music by RICHARD RODGERS
Book & Lyrics by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2d
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Produced by LELAND HAYWARD
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★ National Company—Detroit, Mich.
★ Transcontinental Company—Baltimore, Md.

performers in Hollywood have shown the courage and integrity he showed in "A Star Is Born." Few have commanded the easy naturalness and the fine comedic sense which he displays in "The Best Years of Our Lives." Certainly no theatregoers can forget him in "The Skin of Our Teeth," and even more particularly as Major Joppolo in "A Bell for Adano." Mr. March has the knack of making a character out of a "straight" part, and the most of a "character" part. The test of his skill, and the proof of his range, is to see him as the peppery but benevolent father in "Years Ago" having just seen him as the jaunty and wealthy sergeant in "The Best Years of Our Lives."

A GREAT deal has been written, in tones of at least feigned amazement, because Miss Gordon's comedy is autobiographical. Why, I cannot understand. "We speak of ourselves every time we have not the courage to remain silent," said Anatole France. More plays are autobiographical than most people seem to remember. Their authors may, as a rule, have chosen to reveal only fractions of themselves, and then in terms of characters who have been rechristened. Miss Gordon is franker. That is all. She does not believe in calling a rose by any other name. The young girl who is her heroine is identified as Ruth Gordon. Why not?

Miss Gordon is writing about the fateful moments in her own youth when the theatre first dominated her life. She is recollecting the crises which shook her home in Wollaston, Mass., when as a girl she told her parents she was going to be an actress and left for New York. Certainly, when books about fathers and mothers, eccentric uncles and remembered childhoods flood the market, and our literature is in something of a family way, there is no reason for the legitimate theatre being excluded.

As an actress Miss Gordon has merely chosen to make a play out of what others have elected to make a book. That is her right (I almost said, her obligation) as a theatre person. Unlike the goldfish on the carpet, she has not left her proper element. Because of this, the theatre is the gainer.

Miss Gordon's is a most engaging little comedy, at once affectionate and amusing. I call it "little" only because its unpretentiousness and its intended scale are part of its rightness, its truth, and its charm. It is leisurely and slight. But it is also honest, gay, and dissolving. Of course, it is sentimental. It would not be true to "The Profession" if it were not. Or, for that matter, true to the

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relationships, the sacrifices, and the separations of a happy family.

"Years Ago" manages to include the experiences of many others in Miss Gordon's youthful experience. To the stagestruck of a certain vintage the play's mentions of Hazel Dawn, John Craig, the Castle Square, Otis Skinner, *et al.* are sufficient to do their full Seal-Pack damage. Indeed, so dissolving for facile sobbers are the final moments when Miss Gordon leaves home that "Years Ago" could be said to have an unhappy ending if playgoers were not supported by the radiant realization that the little girl is bound to end up as Ruth Gordon.

The girl in question happens to be played by Patricia Kirkland. I don't think we need to worry too much about Miss Kirkland's leaving home either. She is a most winning and capable young actress. She has beauty, and that is not a hindrance. But more than that, she has a face, alive with animation, which in its modeling suggests Laurette Taylor's.

There is a terrible threat of danger in "Years Ago." It comes when the young Miss Gordon is proposed to by a Harvard man and faces the temptation of leading a secure, average, un-Mazda'd life. One very respectable older woman that I know, a lady ever apt to be more Roman than Greek in her attitude towards the arts, was, by her confession, rooting for the Harvard man and what she recognizes as a respectability. But hers, I'll wager, was a lonely cheer. The rest of us were on Broadway's side; in other words, the side of the "angels."

We were applauding a very pleasant autobiographical comedy, secure in our knowledge that its ending was truly happy. I, at least, was also rejoicing in seeing a play and production, late in its run, and comfortably established and acted. I realized afresh what it is that we who are critics are bound to miss by being condemned to openings.

JOHN MASON BROWN.

Realist and Surrealist

SELECTED POEMS OF MAXWELL BODENHEIM, 1914 - 1944. New York: The Beechhurst Press, Bernard Ackerman, Inc. 1946. 193 *pp.* $3.50.

Reviewed by JOHN FREDERICK NIMS

THE "Selected Poems" of Mr. Bodenheim are chosen from the nine books he has published during the last thirty years. Chronological arrangement permits readers to note the development (or, better, the alteration) of the Bodenheim technique from the beginning of his career to the present.

The earlier poems follow pretty much the same lack of pattern: the typical poem sets us an initial metaphor, for example:

An old silver church in a forest
Is my love for you. . . .
Your cheeks are spent diminuendos. . . .
My heart is a slovenly russet peasant girl. . . .

This metaphor is not so often developed as it is deliberately mixed: each nuance of thought is interpreted not in terms of the original metaphor but by recourse to a new one. As a result there is a great spangle of action and imagery but little concentration or unity. The images tend to be personal and associative; they can mean several things to readers who do not have the author's subjective principle of limitation. Lines from some poems could be transferred to others with apparently no impairment of effect. The metaphors tend also to be complex and to lack inevitability:

Yellow roses in your black hair
Hold the significance
Of stifled mystics defying Time.

If one likes reference of that sort (I happen not to) he will find much to enjoy and admire on nearly every page. Particulars Mr. Bodenheim seems to handle with occasional gaucherie; perhaps that is why his metaphors, unlike those of most poets, work from the concrete to the abstract. In the context of his work, which starts with the particular but tends to abandon it, the process is understandable. On one page we find:

his dry, grey body
Was scattered out upon the rock,
Like a story that could not be told.
Like a vivid hyperbole,
The sun plunged into April's freshness. . . .

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A long white feather slanted back. . . . Like an innocent evasion.

Except that his metaphoric associations are too often explained ("The old men are my thoughts"), Mr. Bodenheim, in his blending of details and categories, is a kind of unconscious surrealist. He also anticipated, though not alone in his time, the preoccupation of later poets with such apparently unpromising subjects as discarded steel rails, pavements, and garbage heaps.

The last section contains "Poems of Social Message": against war, against class injustice, against race prejudice. With the convictions and attitudes of this work it is impossible not to agree, but one may feel that this sort of "poetry" is hardly distinguishable from fervid journalism, although, compared with the earliest poems, these have the advantage of directness and readability.

Mr. Bodenheim's most successful work falls between the arch and literary poems of his youth and his recent manifesto verse. Written, most of them, in his middle period, these have the impact of his man-with-the-hoe social awareness but are more than bare statements. They have broken free from the juggled metaphors to a cleaner and more unified style, often strong and terse; they are reinforced with wit and an observation firm but sympathetic. His method shows itself to best advantage in such poems as "Steel-Mills: South Chicago," "The Steam Shovel," "Baseball Game," and some of the strongly accented "Jazz Poems."

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 196

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 196 will be found in the next issue.

DVJ JTMVZBJ TIO BOZOITHHM

HVWO LAYOZ'J HOEEOIJ: THH

EDO GVED VS VZ EDO

GAJEJUIVGE. JTVN TSACE

UDTIHOJ HTYS. LVHHVTY

DTPHVEE.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 195
What is fame? an empty bubble;
Gold? a transient, shining trouble.
—"Solitude."
JAMES GRAINGER.

Poems . . . by Ralph Hodgson

. . . Don't forget
That the cowslip, rose and violet
Are Facts of Life as well . . .

* * *

"Old World, go when you wish,
We Mod——"
"So you were saying
At Ur and Carcemish
And Nineveh. I'm staying."

* * *

TIME

Spiralwise it spins
And twirls about the Sun,
Both with and withershins
At once, a dual run
Anomalously one;
Its speed is such it gains
Upon itself: outsped,
Outdistanced, it remains
At every point ahead,
No less at all points led,
At none with either strains
Or lapses in the rush
Of its almighty vanes
To mar the poise or hush;
Comparing it for speed:
Lightning is a snail
That pauses on its trail
From bank to underbrush,
Mindful of its need,
With dawn astir, to feed
Before the morning thrush;
Comparing it for poise:
The tops we spun to sleep,
Seemingly so deep
Stockstill, when we were boys,
No more than stumbled round,
Boxwoods though they were,
The best we ever wound
Or whipped of all such toys;
Comparing it for sound:
The wisp of gossamer
Caught in a squirrel's fur,
Groans like a ship aground;
Shadow makes more noise.

* * *

. . . Such dreams as lay our being bare
And show us what we truly are—
Bliss to wake from,
Even into the prison of care
We sleep to break from.

THE PEACE

And now beware the tearful rogue
Who pities the tapeworm, not the dog.

* * *

Who shall paraphrase a tear!

* * *

"Poetaster!" "Good: I'll twinkle in the sky!"

QUEER—QUEER

As a face at a bricked up window,
Or the banging of a door in the desert,
This: "Poking your nose in everywhere!"
"Me?" "You—I give you warning!
'F I catch you in my dreams again,
I'll break your neck next morning!"

* * *

Truth, it is feared, will yet prevail.

* * *

There's one thing to be said for sin—
It does give conscience exercise.

* * *

THE HEVER PICNIC*

Shock howled: the merry buzz stopped dead:
All but Anne went terrified,
As round the bush at a tall man's stride
Came Luckie Lee,
Queen of the Egyptians.
Anne, cutting her a slice of pound-cake, said:
"Why d'you stare so—what d'you see!
Staring like a hawk at me,
Good woman?"
"H'm," their guest replied,
"Weddings . . . beddings . . . and . . ."
"And what?"
The lovely Bullen begged
"And that
Is all, so far as I can see,"
And—muttering to herself aside:
"Not for both her silver bracelets"—
Round the bush at twice the stride
Went Luckie Lee,
Queen of the Egyptians.

*Hever Castle, in Kent, was the Boleyns' family seat. There Henry VIII courted Anne.

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Flaccidity and Feathered Navels

XII POEMS. By Francis Coleman Rosenberger. New York: Gotham Book Mart. 1946. *Unpaged.* $1.
EROTIC POEMS. By Philip Lamantia. Berkeley, Calif.: Bern Porter. 1946. 42 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by DUDLEY FITTS

SPEAKING of Mr. Lamantia's work in his introduction to "Erotic Poems," Mr. Kenneth Rexroth rather solecistically observes that "it has a great drive and excitement that only comes with the conviction that what one has to say is of great importance and people had ought to listen." How he arrived at this conclusion in the present instance, I do not know; the dismal syntax suggests rather the slapdash compliment than the pondered conviction; but what he says is an excellent measure of the value of poetry, and one which I should like to apply to both books.

It may be said at once that "XII Poems" comes closer to measuring up to it than does "Erotic Poems," yet even "XII Poems" is notably flaccid, lacking in "drive and excitement." Eight of the poems are either nerveless exercises ("Museum Piece," "The Settlement of Virginia," "Notes for a Portrait") which never seem to get under way, or windy commonplaces ("Jefferson at Monticello"). "The Settlement of Virginia," for instance, is a monochromatic statement of colonial migration: the "contrivers and intrigants" sail from England, cross the ocean "Above the unlighted cities of shell [Rimbaud?], leaving / The gull's arc to windward" (MacLeish?), move onward to the new world; and finally, after five short strophes of undistinguished motion, the last line informs us that they "Settled Virginia." And so they did. But since there is no especial particularity of image, and since metric and diction are alike shopworn and inert, one finds it difficult to account for the poem at all. A different kind of deadness concludes an otherwise fair sonnet, "Jefferson at Monticello": after a cataloguing of the great man's achievements, culminating in the founding of the college—"The academic village in a field"—it is the reversal of "drive and excitement" to conclude:

Where master and his scholar alike
may find
The unleashed freedom of the human
mind.

For this is simply lazy; it is cliché-mouthing which comes as close as intelligibility will allow to automatic writing.

That Mr. Rosenberger can be better than this is proved by "Manet in Merkers," a decent, controlled, moderately intense poem on the Nazi looting of art objects: "Fat Hermann and quick Heinrich as the connoisseurs / Of tooth fillings, / Judges of the quality of gold in wedding rings, / Testers of spectacle rims, / Masters of the new Exhibition of the Rejected, / The grotesque burglary of a continent." And so on. This has force, and the fifth of the lines which I have quoted approaches something very like true wit. Or again, "Inscription for a Memorial" —another celebration of Jefferson—is prevented only by the flaccidity of its cadences from achieving the lashing strength of a Catullan or Yeatsian political epigram; nevertheless the excitement is there.

Yet I prefer Mr. Rosenberger to Mr. Lamantia, for I suspect that the latter, in spite of all his crepitation, is even more sterile than the former's *longueurs*. Mr. Lamantia may be described as a Reformed Surrealist; he has decided, that is to say, that the school of the Exquisite Corpse is no longer valid. His vision of Love, as one pieces it together from the occasional poems which allow penetration, seems to be respectable enough, and may even be important. Unfortunately, his reformation is not yet complete. In order to come to grips with even the best of the poems—I should instance "Night Vision" and "Hermetic Bird"—one is forced to attend to so much *décor* of the old kind: inflammable women, bodies opened with keys, feathers in navels, and the like. He seems to me to be doing precisely what Mr. Rexroth in his introduction, says he is *not* doing,—writing "fishy, passionless stuff" that is "unmotivated, and is contrived." Every so often, as in "Scenario," he manages a tight hard rhythm: "Dressed in velvet, / Happy and bitten, / She waits for the noise and crowds / Of the next night," which I admire for "Happy and bitten," a neat enough comment on a nightclub whore. But there are too many arrows in the eyes! feathers in the navel! hair on the mouth! spider-webs in the ears! bullets in the bed! There is too much odd domesticity ("Quietly the mothers are killing their sons; quietly the fathers are raping their daughters"); too much hypertension.

O the flock of sheep
breaking their flesh open
with bones sucked
from the brothels!

O the grave of bats
sailing through shops
with the violent hands!

I should like to convince myself that this is more than noise, but I cannot do so. And the noise has not even the promise of *praeterea nihil:* rather it is *praeterea* more noise.

But it is not my word, nor Mr. Rexroth's, that crowns this opus. Mr. Lamantia himself, in "A Civil World" says all that need be said:

> After the street has recaptured its loneliness, a precious stone casts its light on the perambulator which I am to enter. One perambulator in the center of a world. A poet—far away in the mountains—can be heard chanting like an ape. I wonder when he will stop?

Tough War Verse

SOLDIER WORDS. By Hargis Westerfield. Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc. 1946. 128 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by I. L. SALOMON

"SOLDIER WORDS" by Hargis Westerfield is a straightforward, hardhitting, unsophisticated book of poems by a soldier-poet, a wearer of the Purple Heart and a veteran of five beachheads in the Pacific. It took an Ernie Pyle to cover the war so that folks at home felt the immediacy of what was going on, as it took a John Hersey to uncover the deep wound at Hiroshima, no less than the shame in men's hearts. And now in these war poems, dedicated to combat infantrymen, the soldier tells his story.

It is a simple one, told directly, in free verse. The transformation of the raw recruit into a soldier, the hard days of basic training, the long trip west, the homesickness, the first kill, and the lean weary nights when men remember are terrible catalysts in shaping man's nature. The rough, tough stuff of poetry is here, unrefined by intellectuality and unadorned by poetic conceit, for Westerfield understands what breeds war and man's strong moral fibre that succumbs to it.

Sad it is that a bugle and a flag
Are strong with a strength a church
does not have

from "Religious Ceremony" and

You did your duty
No man did better; damn the arrogant
Son of the Ronin who lied to you, led
you southward,
Unlucky but admirable gutty little
Nipponese sniper

from "Sniper" and

Because I am an American
Any slave in the whole world
Makes me a slave

from "American, Mystical," are lines typical of the tone of this book.

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Keys Subjective, Harsh, and Witty

ROCOCO SUMMER AND OTHER POEMS. By Lawrence P. Spingarn. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1947. 64 pp. $2.50.

THE LONG REPRIEVE. By Hubert Creekmore. New York: New Directions. 1946. 67 pp. $2.50.

ESSAY ON MARRIAGE. By Anne Finch. New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1947. 35 pp. $1.

Reviewed by A. M. SULLIVAN

LAWRENCE SPINGARN and Hubert Creekmore are interesting young poets in their contrasting merits, promises, and shortcomings. Spingarn is the more lyrical; Creekmore the more energetic. Spingarn is self-conscious, and the pages of his poems turn like mirrors, and the reflections are for the most part pleasing, with many memorable images and musical lines. Creekmore is self-conscious only in his technical experiments with verse structure and contrapuntal arrangements. Creekmore's poems are heavily charged, and one is conscious of an eloquence that somehow gets through the tangles of a highly stylized form. Selden Rodman in a brief introduction makes an analysis of Creekmore's technique saying, "Harshness — a density of meaning, an eccentricity of syntax, over-intellectualized imagery and insufficiency of music in the less successful poems is the price that Creekmore is paying at this point for his ambition." Nothing we could say would be more revealing. The poet spent many months at the American base at New Caledonia, and "The Long Reprieve" is a report of his observations and emotions. He has a strong musical pulse when it is permitted to beat out its rhythms. "Night at Sea" is a poem of high intellectual adventure:

Knotted in their nets, the stars draw tight,
But man is light-years from his kind.
The black mast rocks against the empty night,
Ponderously stabbing the silent blind.

It is difficult to quote Creekmore, for the lines out of context lose some of their individuality, and take on an undergraduate pretense. "Ave, Ad Infinitum" sounds as prosy as a scientific report, yet the poem as a whole does have form and wears a deceptive mask over its poetic concept. But what could be more prosy than

The incidence of heroes has a definite relation to accidents
The factors are present. Given the quality of men
The production of heroes would climb to millions
On the assembly line of war—a cumbersome number.

Creekmore is rich in potentials. When he is more interested in causes than effects, his poetry will take on deeper spiritual values, and the inner music he denies will insist on being heard. The brash confidence of Creekmore is never found in Spingarn who disciplines his poetic initiative to the accepted and traditional meters. Not that Spingarn lacks a sense of adventure. His metaphors are frequently arresting. In "Stanzas for the

The Shape of Fear

By Jeremy Ingalls

THE shape of fear is never shape but sound,
Glissando decibel and muttering,
The claw-scratch at the wood, the chattering
Of leaf and bird within the garbling storm.
The shape of fear is air-shape in the throat.
Culminating thunder is its coming;
The shape of ear, its entrance and its winding,
The long alert which waits the final clang.
It is the shape of air, occurrence split
Upon the apprehension of the ear,
Vibration's tug to shape of shattering.

The laugh, the cry are equal shapes in sound,
The shape of sound, extensor form of time.
Air's passage, nerve's attention, choke and howl,
Music's smooth deceiving, all we know,
First cry, last rasp: the nighthawk's screech at night
Until last murder in the split of light.

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Closing of a House" he sees his aunt's home lose the tedious quarrel with nature, when—"Her fences forced, the trees graze in her fields." The physical vision of trees invading the pasture is highly satisfactory to the observer. Spingarn is a New Englander, steeped in its traditions, and sensitive to the slow suffocation of the patrician spirit, where

Afternoon, like a pale flag, waved surrender
Against the dark, determined hills.

His most ambitious poem is the "Spanish Lover," a mystical narrative written in free hexameters, a difficult device for telling a story. But the tale of the Spanish officer who deserted his ship, and won the love of a prim New England lady, is well told, and the poet has given it the haunting quality that belongs to New England of two centuries ago with its piety, slave running, and piracy. Spingarn will probably take a surer grip on his craft as he tests his strength objectively, giving less attention to self-analysis. He is a sensitive singer who is yet to seize a major theme.

"Essay on Marriage," by Anne Finch, is precisely described in its title. It is a dissertation on marriage by a shrewd observer of modern marital custom, presented in neat tetrameter couplets. The poet is skilled in versification, and obtains considerable variety within the strictures of the form. The essay is divided into five sections which consider the problems, rewards, dangers, and punishments of the nuptial state. The approach is pragmatic, never spiritual. Marriage is a problem in adjustments of the personal, the physical, the material:

Tradition is no guide. The old
Romantic impulse has gone cold;
The Christian ethic has in fact
Small bearing on the way we act.

The poem is objective, and rational, and there is nothing to remind one of a hymn to Hymen, nothing of the bliss of Spenser, or the piety of Patmore. But there is some poetry in the essay. It occurs for the most part in the last few pages where the concept of a marriage state takes on a dignity of union rather than a barter of interests and conveniences. Dismissing the romantic, if unhappy story of Tristan and Isolde, the poet says:

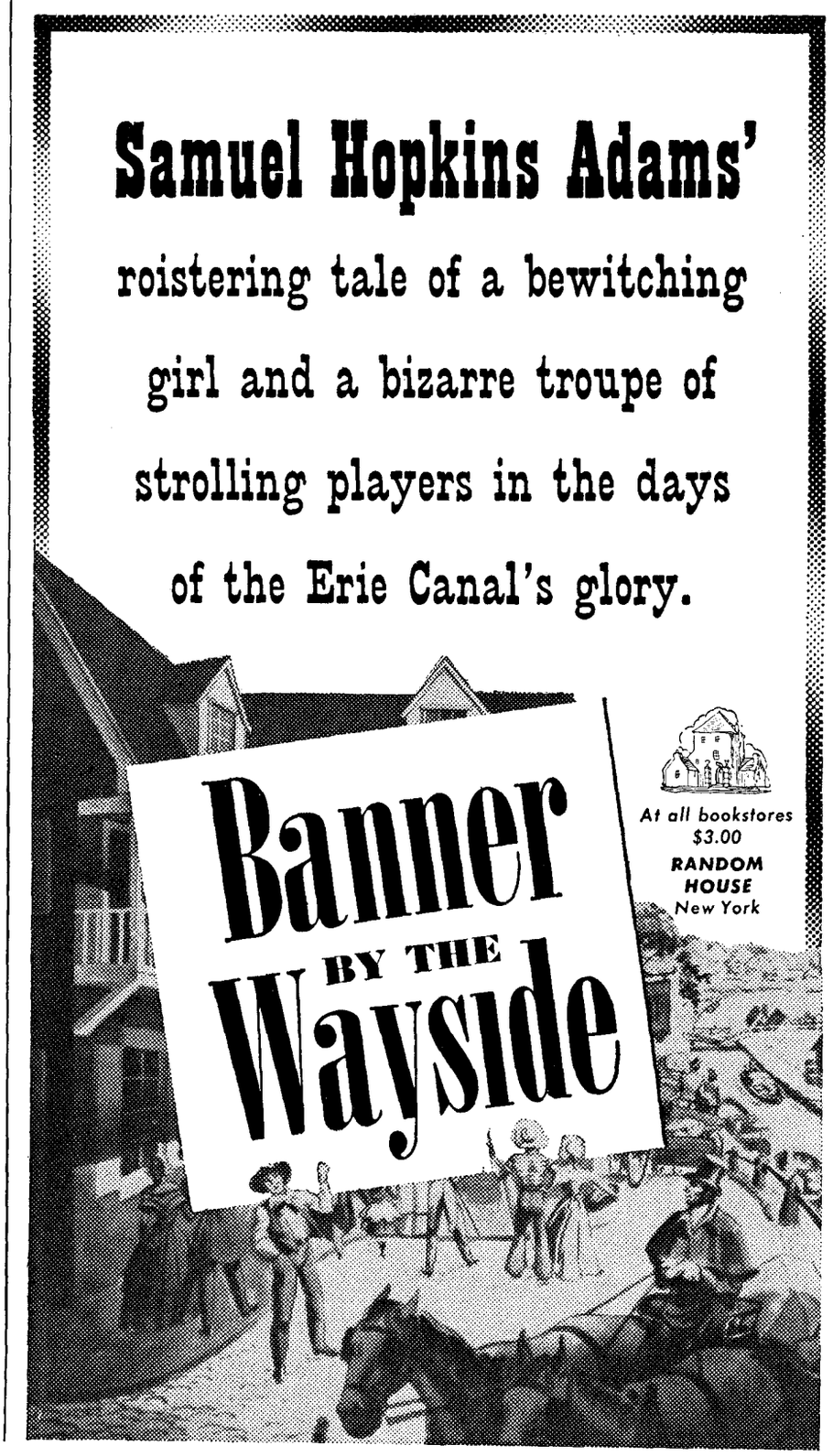
They in a world of shadows moved,
Where love untested and unproved,
Fed on itself, and could achieve
Only a world of make-believe

and offers the world of nature, where men and women marvel at the revelation of the sensory universe—the rising sun, the changing seasons and asks them to find their joys, and solace where

Knowing no impulse to go back
They mark the prospect of their track,
And without terror or remorse
Set out in their eventful course.

If Anne Finch does not find a wholly satisfactory answer to the question she poses, it may be because the evidence is outside her carefully chosen limits. To her, marriages are not made in heaven, but by collective bargaining. The lack of the spiritual leaves a large void in a poem which reveals fine talent, and keen philosophic wit.

A. M. Sullivan is an ex-president of the Poetry Society of America. His latest book of poems is "Stars and Atoms Have No Size."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"Public Poets"

CIVILIAN POEMS. By Don Gordon. New York: The Beechhurst Press, Bernard Ackerman, Inc. 1946. 35 pp. $2.

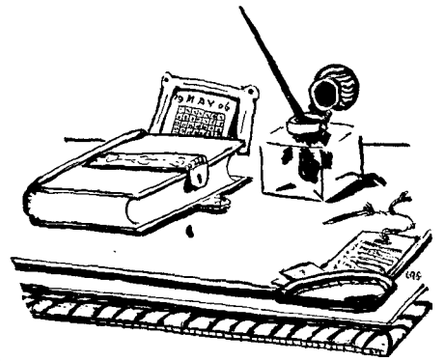
THE GLASS MOUNTAIN. By Aaron Kramer. The same.

Reviewed by GERARD PREVIN MEYER

IN a moment of undergraduate whimsy, the publisher of these two poets decided to issue their two volumes in one, in a way that must be seen to be properly appreciated—after reading Mr. Gordon's book to its last page, you are suddenly confronted with the back of Mr. Kramer's, *upside down*! My commiserations to the poets who are stood on their heads in this unceremonious fashion.

In all fairness, I must go on to say that the reader need have no fear of himself being compelled to stand on his head to read either "Civilian Poems" or "The Glass Mountain." Both Don Gordon and Aaron Kramer are "public poets," rather than purveyors of private knowledge. They are writing for an audience—and, to that end, they readily yield the intelligibility which is so often deliberately held in check by the more notable poets of our time.

Mr. Gordon, indeed, is conscious of a prophetic mission, and proclaims it. The mission which the title "Civilian Poems" suggests, infuses all his poems to an oppressive extent. It is, simply, that those of us who did not ourselves take part in the armed effort of World War II have a debt to pay to those who did. Just how this debt is to be paid, except in terms of vicarious suffering, is nowhere indicated. The fact is, that Mr. Gordon is suffering—or has suffered—from a purely personal "civilian fatigue," however much he may seek to dress this mood in a cloak of universal prophecy. Basically, these poems are the evidence of a feeling of guilt—the guilt is imaginary, since the poet and others of like sincerity were civilians rather than "in the service" not through any choice of their own—and he who attempts to expiate an imaginary guilt is doomed to certain failure.



What poetry comes through from behind the assumed mask of the prophet is touched with this neurotic note. The effect of strain is not lessened by the Whitmanesque rhythms and word-usage:

> He inherits the purpose of the moving sea, the change continuous from water to land.

There is a suggestion, too, of Wilfred Owen, who also was moved from a purer poetry into the rhetorical position of the prophet:

> We, and the hills,
> And love, do not matter to them:
> they must matter to us.

(Compare Owen's: "These men are worth/Your tears. You are not worth their merriment.")

But, however much the reader may wince when he comes across such lines as these in "The Warhead":

> Kinship will be thrust upon us; necessity
> like peace is jet-propelled,
> The rocket may teach us to adore the infant in the warhead

which may be prophecy or just wishful thinking, but hardly attains the distinction of poetry, there is no denying the impact of such occasional successes as "Occupied Country":

> Quietly the men maimed and the men dead are entering the unbroken American houses; the last march is across the threshhold of
>
> these rooms into the abode of the civilian mind. The tears given briefly upon their return will not restore them: henceforth
>
> they dwell with us, we are a somber country occupied by heroes.

There is nearly "total statement" in this poem, and little of the bleakly deliberate metaphor which overcasts so much of this book. One hopes that when Mr. Gordon has worked himself loose of his present theme—perhaps he has, already—he will do more work in this vein: an idiom both more musical and more persuasive than persuasion itself.

Mr. Kramer's public speech is more varied in theme than Mr. Gordon's, but inferior in craftsmanship. His diction and metaphor are usually all too familiar ("scholarly, like a ritual," "a glamorous dream," "a marvelous change," etc.), and his rhythms are not tight enough to give the effect of form fully realized—in at least two of his poems, "The Glass Mountain" and "Marching Song," perhaps be-

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cause he has purposely written words for or to music. The pathetic fallacy does not help, either: "Silent watches/ a worried moon; silent the meek stars." To achieve a power of statement, he goes in for a really Teutonic violence: "What bottomless evil/flew up through our fingers/or throats to poison/the sky and offend you?/Let thunder announce it!/Let lightning reveal it!/We will plead guilty,/believe us, believe!" To say the least, this is unconvincing. Sometimes his rhythms jingle and jangle; at other moments, when he turns to the iambic pentameter, it is as if Tennyson had never died.

Mr. Kramer's rhymes are sometimes just plain bad (Horn-dawn, folded-hold it). At other times, he uses the fashionable slant rhyme for no organic reason, and to no particular effect (June-dawn, hardly better than June-moon!).

The author of "The Glass Mountain," still in his twenties, has already produced six books, and this is his seventh. Poets are notoriously allergic to advice, but if Mr. Kramer is as wise as he is song-ridden—and, whatever their defects as art, these poems do seem to spring from an impulse to say something, sing something—he will go more slowly from now on, attend to the essential minutiae of versification with more care than he has so far been willing to display, and trust less to words of violence and more to the violence of words not in themselves explosive. Indeed, in his quieter moments, he can communicate an authentic emotion with the proper tone. Mr. Kramer should sound these quieter lyric notes more often.

Wild Geese Flying

By Eric Wilson Barker

PERHAPS it was our hearts that heard them first
since they flew higher than the Valkyries
in that wild sky where rode gray clouds,
and wind like fire that sweeps through a forest
of hemlock, drove clouds like smoke
and hid the northward wings.

Before the green flames flickered from the ground
theirs the first rumor through the changing air,
the high and homeward burning from the Gulf
where Mexico at yesterday's first star
lay inland dim with waters;
and heard her dim and inland waters rise,
the cool marsh twilights shaken into foam;
while yet the ripples widened to the reeds
watched prows of living birds
flung upward from the lakes on dripping wings,
spread their dark sails,
through that intense crepuscular blue sea
drive the first wedge that split the wind
and felt the wind like water
curving cool aside,
as waves from galleons beaked and shouldering home.

By dusk like lupines in the lake-fed pines
the last had drummed upon the northward track,
and for some drops of time
the vibrant air as when a bow is sprung
still throbbed and sang. Then Mexico's
lynx-footed night slipped down to drink,
the silence grew with stars.

Now that we've set a leaping flame on beauty's heels
and marked a dubious point in time
to speculate on ruin for the world,
when shall wild flocks break silence there again?
What final heir of heaven's extremer sound,
struck still as Shelley on the windy down,
shall hear them crying through the cloudy air,
(and in that crying all the fire of Spring
yet sad as Autumn with her blowing leaves)
beating toward the Gulf?

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N. Y. Herald Tribune Book Review

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ILLINOIS is an enormous fiddle held under the inland
Chin of Lake Michigan and tuned to the pitch of rustling
Corn, the harvest-grass of America, flesh of the prairie;
Illinois, full-acred and flowing a miracle of maize.
Here the thin sliced fugue of cock-crowing is relayed
Through the wisp of not yet day from barn to spectral
Barn buoyed above the acre-leaching mist.

The prairie is a bull bison shaking his shaggy mane
In the sun, branded with four winds on its smooth flank;
A plains-child holding a sea-shell to her ear
To hear the strange memory of the ocean tide;
A maelstrom of excited sod with its loin frothing
With field daisy and pollen-fever in its blood;
A rendezvous for the wind with its archery
Of bending wheat grass, supple and sure of aim.
It is a world quilted with grass roots, sequined
With stars, singing in a killdeer's spacious mood.
Its township acres are spread like a net to dry.

Under lark flight it lies on silent edge, saved
By prolific name, calling color, drinking seed to call
Again in the spring. Strong in its level way there is
Always memory of direction tethered to the landscape.
It is a melody in the fingers of morning,
A faith deep-planted in the roots of its pastures,
A sound riveted on the corner-shaped wind
Long in each syllable, open, voweling the mystery.
Men's eyes look with each dawn the grace of its distance.

A tameless urgency strides in the loam sweep. Lightning
Burns in black furrowed earth cloud, breaking from clod,
Plaiting itself into thigh-deep grass and tall stories.
The tawny broom of the prairie sweeps across
Its endless threshold the dust of thunder and season
And sunrise, purple powder settling upon cabbage
And clover, silver upon pumpkin and husk. The lips
Of the Lake blow a rinsing mist in the pink-swell of orchard.
A lavish sweep of the sky seems underfoot in a somerset,
A wide flat land where dawn shouts "Gee" and "Haw"
And turns the season plowing in both directions
A green furrow. Corn-scoops of stars are shoveled overhead
When twilight tilts to the warm curve of earth.

Here on the broad beach of the grass-washed plain sprout
The tall rustling stalks high as the whale-spout.
In the tassel-sea fall wind lures the prairie whale breaching,
Easy prey for chill tines of harpooning weather,
Its gold carcass to fill farm crib and food for the crow.

Here where first the rich soil of the Sauk scoured
The Deere mouldboard bright as a gloried looking-glass,
The loam hand is open with heavy bushel from stalk
In the certain sequence of season; October runs
With the color of fox and pheasant; the silence of unstoried
Moccasin-tread tiptoes green with the wheat in March fields;
Meadowlarks, brown sparks flying from hammered temper
Of soft weather, drop into grass-cupped hands of sun acres;
Hens from the bladed coverts call the American
Name of the grass-spread-land which lies like a red
Warrior resting his head in Lake Michigan's elbow.

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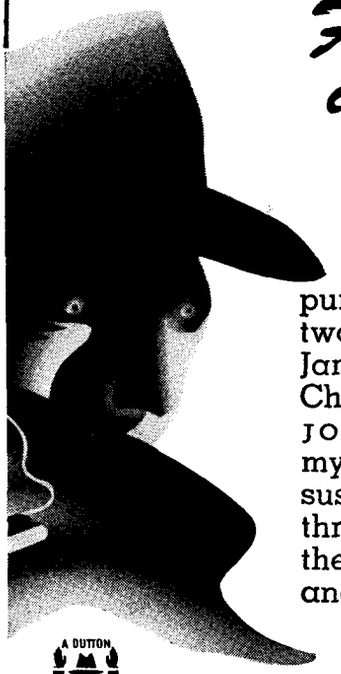
Andean Fury

SECRET COUNTRY. By Jorge Carrera Andrade. Translated by Muna Lee. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1946. 77 pp. $2.50.

Reviewed by MARTHA BACON

MISS LEE has, on the whole, rendered the poems included in Mr. Carrera Andrade's volume pretty literally and I think her course was wise because the most salient feature of the book to the non-Spanish reader is the richness, depth, and variety of the metaphor and the image. She has given us the content and very little else, though I question her interpretations on several points. For example, the line "y los sirve de ejemplo la santoral de los animalitos" is rendered "and the lives of the saints and the little animals are their example." It strikes me that this is not exact to begin with (though this is a matter that is between Miss Lee and her subject), and that the spirit of the original has been somehow disguised or lost. I feel that the "santoral" of the "animalitos" (the saint's book of little animals, literally) is a clear statement of the sanctity of little animals. Their whole being is a panegyric of innocence and in this instance the translator has confused the issue by introducing the "santoral" and the "animalitos" as separate and unrelated ideas. She has lost the symbol. But what would you?

Successful translation must not only give us the soul of a poem but must incorporate that soul in a new and if possible equally splendid body. It is a reincarnation devoutly to be wished for and Miss Lee has done well with a next to impossible task, and has confronted us with the vivid, grotesque, and beautiful vision of her poet. He is, indeed, well worth translating for his fury and his imagination. Having discovered his own lost Atlantis, he has conveyed it to his readers in a series of fiery images and bizarre views of usual objects. One is sometimes set back on one's heels by his juxtapositions though this may be a matter of language. The English genius and the Spanish genius can't always dovetail. But as John Peale Bishop has pointed out, only a poet could see corn hanging from the rafters by "canary wings." And besides this there are any number of poetic discourses, all equally various; from the massive lines of the "Secunda Vida de Mi Madre" and the clear proportions of "El Canton sin Nombre," to the delicate and warm-hearted "Domingo" with its odd and graceful figure of the bell, interpreted



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as the bare-foot, blue-eyed creature, scampering over the country-side. And there is the fantasy of the "Islas sin Nombre" and

. . . little women
Who live upon eels
And the minuscule fishes
Of the mild bays.

He has the humanity to know that "country people are less alone because they make one with the land." He sees the whole picture of life and presents it, a fact which in itself will always make for a certain stunning kind of ugliness in a work of art, as well as for beauty.

I do not believe that it is a virtue or a vice in poetry to reflect the spirit of a country or an era. Great poets are often born out of their time and are apt to find their environments unsympathetic, but there is a certain new world breath in this book, excellent for its own sake. Mr. Bishop discusses the sources and influences to which Mr. Carrera Andrade owes the flavor of his poetry and these are points on which I am not qualified to utter a word, but beyond all literary atavisms there is a certain wild Andean quality in "Secret Country" that takes us out of the libraries of Europe, that is neither part of poetic tradition nor is it relentlessly avant-garde. It is poetry of the western hemisphere. Any one who reads Spanish will be likely, if he enjoys poetry, to find this book very much worth while and for those who don't know that language here is an interpretation which will add to their understanding and which will certainly enlarge their sphere of enjoyment.

Martha Bacon is herself a poet and the daughter of a poet, Leonard Bacon. She has written two books of poems, "Lament for the Chieftains" and "Things Visible and Invisible."

JAMES STEPHENS—TOUCHSTONE

(Continued from page 12)

And suddenly I wakened in a fright;
I thought I heard a movement in the room
But did not dare to look; I snuggled right
Down underneath the bedclothes—Then a boom,
And a tremendous voice said, *"Sit up, lad,*
And let me see your face." So up I sat,
Although I didn't want to—I was glad
I did though, for it was an angel that
Had called me, and he said, he'd come to know
Was I the boy who wouldn't say his prayers
Nor do his sums—and that I'd have to go
Straight down to hell because of such affairs:
. . . I said I'd be converted, and do good
If he would let me off—He said he would.

In all of these poems it is Stephens's identification with his material that gives them their force, or wit, or beauty, or truth. He identifies with everything he looks at, as in his often-quoted "Little Things"; as well as "The Goat Paths," "The Snare," "The Lark," "To The Four Courts Please," and "What Thomas An Buile Said in a Pub." For him, everything in the universe is "The Voice Of God":

I bent again unto the ground
And I heard the quiet sound
Which the grasses make when they
Come up laughing from the clay.

—We are the voice of God!—they said;
Thereupon I bent my head
Down again that I might see
If they truly spoke to me.

But, around me, everywhere,
Grass and tree and mountain were
Thundering in mighty glee,
—We are the voice of deity!—
And I leaped from where I lay!
I danced upon the laughing clay!
And, to the rock that sang beside,
—We are the voice of God!—I cried.

Other poets may have identified with a greater variety of material, or with material in itself more elaborate; or they may, like Joyce, have extended the range and complexity of such identifications. But none exceeds Stephens in the vitality and genuineness of his. Indeed it is a question whether any comparison can be made—once genuineness has been established—between degrees of it.

As Stephens has said, this identification holds good for prose just as it does for poetry. But in poetry it is apt to be more localized, intense, and unique. Certainly if it can be recognized in poetry, it can be recognized anywhere.

This genuineness of identification, then, may be the touchstone for which we have been looking. We do not perceive it as a *thing,* which we may take from one writer and apply, like a yardstick, to another. It is a *sensation,* which we obtain through an activity of the mind, of the whole person; through an act of the imagination corresponding somewhat to the original imaginative act of the artist. And when we have recognized this activity in one, we are more apt to recognize it in another; which is the acquisition of taste.

Taste is not infallible, like a measurement; which after all measures only sizes—that is, itself—and so, if it is done correctly, cannot go wrong. Taste is an activity which, like life, grows and develops with use; shrinks and withers away with non-use. And for the acquisition of taste in modern writing, there can be no more delightful an introduction, nor, I believe, any surer or more genuine a touchstone than the prose and poetry of James Stephens.

Lloyd Frankenberg is the author of "The Red Kite," a volume of poems, and also of a forthcoming book on the meanings in poetry, which will include the above essay.

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HANDEL, THE MESSIAH. Huddersfield Choral Society, Liverpool Philharmonic, Sargent. Isobel Baillie, Gladys Ripley, Norman Walker, James Johnston. Columbia M 666 (19) Two vols. $23.63 (*Boxed together*)	First post-war job of this type shows how improved fidelity greatly increases intelligibility, sense of liveness, reduces usual blur—even in very resonant hall. More bass than in current U. S. recordings: good for Handel.	A to A—	Stunning recording of traditional British Messiah as given for more than century by this chorus. First-rate choral singing, beautiful phrasing, intonation. Solos typically British, and good. Unusual clarity for such big ensemble.

MESSIAH

HERE it is, the traditional Messiah, complete in the first major post-war recording of this type. This column recommends it without reserve, even though Victor has a Messiah coming (they say). And even though, technically speaking, this is scarcely an "authentic" performance, as Handel wrote it.

If Bach, for best listening, should be "authentically" performed, why is a jumbo-sized Messiah good?

True as a general principle, all older music should be performed with reasonable fidelity to the composer's direct intentions, with a minimum of speculation as to what he might have done if he had been born later. But two big facts make the Messiah an exception. First, as given in England, Messiah constitutes an extraordinary tradition to which we must give validity on its own. The above records reflect that tradition. Second, musically speaking, Handel can take enormous enlargement and suffer little; Bach cannot without grossly distorting the intentions of the music itself and its intelligibility.

The two men lived in worlds apart. Bach was a small town provincial in an almost menial job, who suffered from inadequate performers and a decidedly indifferent "audience." He was thus quite oblivious to the outward possibilities of showmanship in music; his interest centered on the inner meaning of the music. He was not one to stop at complexities and involvements if there was far more to be said than could conveniently be digested at a single hearing. He depended for clarity on brilliant, contrasted tone colors and a precise balance between the complex elements of his music. Note that almost every Bach aria has an instrumental obbligato by some high colored instrument, oboe, viola d'amore, trumpet, even the lute. A huge orchestra and chorus instantly spoil the precise balance between these soloists and other elements.

Handel, on the other hand, had an uncanny sense of theatre. He was a much traveled citizen of the then world; he wrote for a brilliant audience in the capital of a country that then as now loved outward pomp and circumstance; his musical forces were the finest available. His work is accurately and marvelously calculated for outward effect—so much so that it is a miracle so much musical sense is there! It is music everywhere direct, in broad outline, without complications, as befits the effects of pageantry. Such music can take the enormous enlargement in performance common in England without harm; even the solo vocal parts are unaffected, for Handel's accompaniment never got in the way of his star singers. And note that very seldom does he introduce a solo instrument to complicate matters à la Bach. Because of these things Messiah is musically sensible even at 4,000—whereas the Bach B minor Mass is a turgid mass of unintelligibility with far fewer.

Finally, note this musical bombshell. Handel's original? From strangely vague accounts his orchestra seems to have included few strings—normally a dozen violins—a fantastic proportion of woodwinds, which customarily doubled all the written string parts. One oboe went with every three violins (our proportion one to sixteen or fewer); there was a bassoon for every cello and every bass fiddle. In effect this meant largely a woodwind orchestra. The chorus (with boy sopranos) was normally the same size as the orchestra. Yes, it would be decidedly interesting to hear Messiah well performed, in the original.

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Two Contemporary British Poets

COLLECTED POEMS. By Henry Treece. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1946. 155 *pp.* $2.50.

POEMS: 1938 - 1945. By Robert Graves. New York: Creative Age Press. 1946. 58 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by JOHN FREDERICK NIMS

THOUGH Robert Graves the well-known novelist, has published many volumes of poetry since 1917, he insists in the foreword to his present book that "I write poems for poets . . . for people in general I write prose, and am content that they should be unaware that I do anything else. To write poems for other than poets is wasteful"—a statement to ponder. It is true that these poems (quite different from Mr. Graves's early ballad-like verses) make few concessions to popular taste or ready understanding; they are, most of them, difficult poems: abrupt, wry, elliptical, oblique, enigmatic. They are without the heavily charged poetic atmosphere, the imaginative charm, and the metrical vitality of Mr. Treece's work. Yet they have their own rough dignity; like the poetry of Thomas Hardy, they show the novelist's eye for character and situation. But, unlike Hardy's, many are written in a kind of off-hand prose rhythm. A few poems, and these the most successful, are very direct and simple: "The Thieves," "The Villagers and Death," "She Tells Her Love While Half Asleep," and "The Suicide in the Copse:"

The suicide, far from content,
Stared down at his own shattered skull:
Was this what he meant? . . .

There was nowhere at all to go,
And no diversion now but to peruse
What literature the winds might blow

Into the copse where his body lay—
A year-old sheet of sporting news,
A crumpled schoolboy essay.

The last section of the volume is made up of Satires and Grotesque, all of them amusing and neatly done.

Henry Treece, who has now gathered his collected poems for American publication, is one of the most impressive of contemporary English poets. Treece, a flight-lieutenant in the war, was a leader in the Apocalyptic and Personalist reactions against the dry social poetry of the thirties and toward a more personal, more inward, more "romantic" sort of poetry. Among his avocations he lists "piano music from Scarlatti to Meade 'Lux' Lewis"; and there is a kind of pianistic shimmer of image and a play of mood in his poetry, both in the staccato of "Towards a Personal Armageddon," a sonnet-sequence knobby with images disparate but fused (like some surrealist detail), and in the legato, composed in wailful minors, of his "Mystic Numbers." The romantic strain in his work is shown in a certain expansiveness, almost an irresponsibility, of metaphor. For Shelley, a skylark was "like a poet hidden," "like a high-born maiden," "like a glow-worm golden," and "like a rose embowered." Treece is equally generous, but likely to employ the whole four images in a line or two instead of giving them Shelley's twenty-line development.

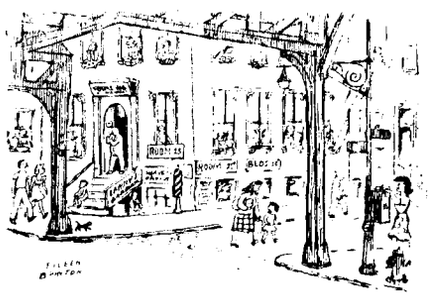
The result is a rough, angular, explosive poetry more exciting to experience than it is easy to follow. Treece is not so much obscure as he is mysterious. His method is one not of statement but of suggestion (true also of "To a Skylark," which sounds pretty foolish on the level of statement). T. S. Eliot has said that poetry is concerned not with thought but with the emotional consequences of thought—a judgment that would be applicable to the poetry of Treece, who gives us not what he thinks so much as what he feels of communication, as other poets use words. Even when the images do not communicate they are often delightful as musical or graphic designs, and this (in spite of the League for Sanity in Poetry) is surely a legitimate gratification: we can admire a seashell or the shape of a wave without asking what it means. Besides, if the thought directing this verbal excitement is not always directly apparent, its terror and its urgency are, and are the more impressive because Treece seems to be working out his preoccupations in his own way and without too much regard for the entertainment of his reader. Not that he is always successful; there is perhaps more poetry here than there are poems.

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

(*Continued from page* 13)

recuperate from too much excitement —and perhaps to take stock—the poet went back to college and completed his interrupted schooling. The experience did him no more harm than had been done by the books he discarded at sea. On the other hand, it provided the calm security necessary to write his first novel. What he did about the curriculum is something of a mystery, but obviously he satisfied the requirements, for Lincoln University not only gave him a bachelor's degree but an honorary doctorate.

The literary and artistic movement which Cullen and Hughes highlighted was regarded sympathetically, but it was never quite certified or approved as a phase of America's cultural growth. In the twenties the Negro's gifts were still departmentalized. There were poets in the United States, and there were Negro poets. There were musicians, and there were Negro musicians. There were painters, and there were Negro painters. Cullen abhorred this attitude. Almost his only public comments about the art in which he expressed himself were pleas for an evaluation of his work strictly on its merits, without racial considerations. He was to learn, however, that this was no small matter.



Cullen did not live to see another springtime resurgence of his own creative powers comparable with the impulse that produced his first three books of poetry, the books which give his selected poems most of their lilt and brightness. He did live to see young poets like Gwendolyn Brooks and Robert E. Hayden coming up for the kind of evaluation he had hoped to receive. Before he was forty, a second generation of the renaissance, owing much to him and to Langston Hughes, was on the way.

A curious footnote to these events now reveals that Langston Hughes, whose work seemed to have such a definite Negro flavor in the days of the Dark Tower, has not only written the lyrics for the successful musical adaptation of "Street Scene" but has also published "Fields of Wonder," a volume of poems which contains not a single blue note. The renaissance isn't over yet.

Arna Bontemps, at 44, *is twice recipient of a Julius Rosenwald fellowship, a Chicago University M.A., author of several books, collaborator on a play with the late Countee Cullen, and librarian of Fisk University.*

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DOUBLE-CROSTIC NO. 678*

Reg. U. S. Patent Office

By Elizabeth S. Kingsley

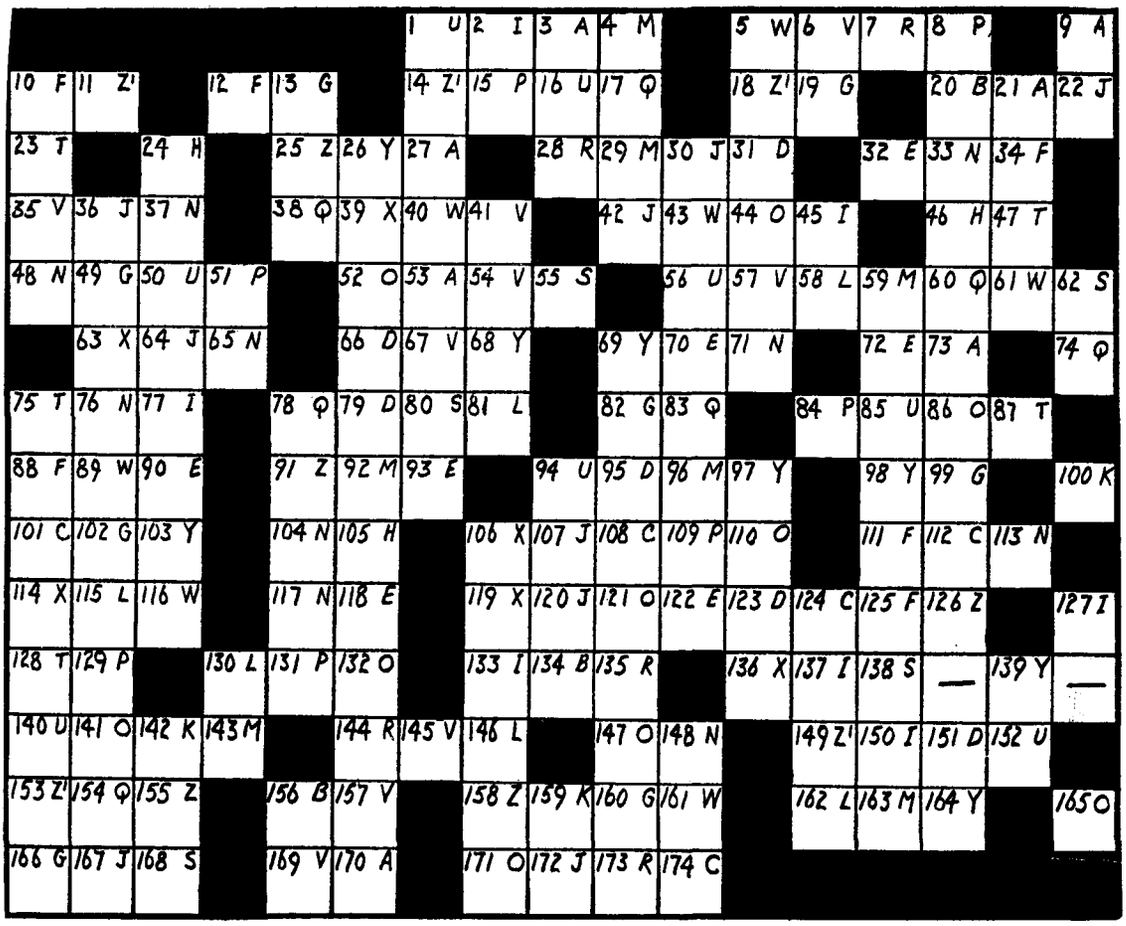
DEFINITIONS	WORDS
A. The green woodpecker (Dial. Eng.).	21 27 9 53 170 3 73
B. In Japan, a song of any kind, but usually applied to the tanka.	134 20 156
C. Greek physician in Rome, later in Greece, Italy, and Arabia (2nd Cent. A.D.).	108 124 174 101 112
D. Wife of Elkanah and mother of Samuel (Bib.).	123 66 31 151 95 79
E. American sculptor (1885-; "Centaur and Dryad," Detroit Museum of Art).	90 32 70 93 72 118 122
F. Country in North America.	88 111 125 10 34 12
G. Former Austrian crownland on the Adriatic, now Yugoslavia.	99 82 102 160 49 13 19 166
H. Mt. in Luzon, P. I., 5264 ft.	105 46 24
I. Name of bay in victory for English fleet under Nelson, Aug. 1, 1798.	127 133 137 2 77 150 45
J. Living in rivers and streums (Biol.).	167 36 22 30 42 64 107 120 172
K. Surname of "Phil," successor to du Maurier on the staff of *Punch*, 1896.	100 159 142
L. Close in personal relationship (Fr.).	162 146 58 115 81 130
M. Short songs of a rustic or simple character.	4 29 163 92 96 59 143
N. An aperture placed at the foot of a cross, as in the west end of a cruciform church (2 wds.).	48 37 71 65 104 148 33 113 76 117
O. Later on; a time coming by and by.	141 171 52 86 110 147 165 44 132 121
P. State of being fiery (2 wds.).	51 131 129 8 109 15 84
Q. Used, with word Z' as epithet, for a style of Italic alphabet having top and bottom flourishes.	38 154 74 78 17 60 83
R. To exalt the spirit of.	144 28 7 135 173
S. Epithet of an ornamental "spruce" of handsome foliage (eastern Asia).	55 80 168 62 138
T. Nomenclature (Biol.).	75 128 87 23 47
U. Suffered extremity from deprivation of any necessity.	94 1 16 50 152 85 56 140
V. English actor in Shakespearean adaptations by Dryden and others (1635-1710).	41 54 35 157 145 67 169 6 57
W. To give forth effluence.	161 40 43 5 89 116 61
X. Heedful.	39 114 106 119 136 63
Y. Island in Sea of Okhotsk belonging to Russia.	164 139 68 26 69 103 98 97
Z. The depth of friable earth.	25 91 155 126 158
Z'. Epithet for word Q describing a fancy style of alphabet.	153 18 149 11 14

* This is poetry in Scotch dialect, not difficult, and evidenced largely by sawed-off words, just a few. I couldn't resist it!—E. S. K.

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-odd words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square of the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Read up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).



Solution of last week's Double-Crostic will be found on page 16 of this issue.

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